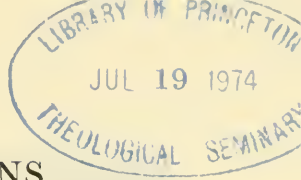


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The life and opinions of
John de Wycliffe

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THE
LIFE AND OPINIONS

OF

JOHN DE WYCLIFFE, D. D.

Robert Vaughan

VOL. I.

AMS PRESS
NEW YORK



JOHN de WYCLIFFE, D.D.

*Engraved by E. S. Tindon, from the original picture by Sir Antonio More,
now on his tomb in the Vestry of Wyke, - Richmondshire.*

THE
LIFE AND OPINIONS
OF
JOHN DE WYCLIFFE, D. D.

ILLUSTRATED PRINCIPALLY FROM HIS

Unpublished Manuscripts;

WITH

A PRELIMINARY VIEW OF THE PAPAL SYSTEM, AND OF THE STATE OF
THE PROTESTANT DOCTRINE IN EUROPE,

TO THE

COMMENCEMENT OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

BY

ROBERT VAUGHAN.

VOL. I.

SECOND EDITION,

MUCH IMPROVED.

“ Quod si deficient vires, audacia certè
Laus erit; in magnis et voluisse sat est.”
PROPERTIUS.

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P R E F A C E.

THE name of John de Wycliffe appears in the page of history, as that of the first Englishman whose views of Christianity were such as to induce a renunciation of the spiritual as well as of the temporal power claimed by the pontiffs; and to his mind, nearly every principle of our general Protestantism may be distinctly traced. To diffuse his doctrine among his countrymen, was the object to which his energies were directed in the face of every danger, with an industry which is almost incredible, and with a success which his enemies describe as a leading cause of the revolution which signalized the reign of Henry the eighth. By that event, though the result of imperfect motives in the sovereign, and defective in many of its principles, a value was at length conferred on the birth-right of the men of this land, which no second change could have imparted. Such, at least, must be the persuasion of every Protestant believer; and

he must in consequence feel, that the Life of our patriarch Reformer is the last which should be left to be gathered from the tales of adversaries, who have employed their utmost ingenuity to conceal his virtues, or to convert them into crime. Nor will it be admitted for a moment, by the sincere disciple of the Reformation, that the History, and the Opinions of Wycliffe, may be sufficiently known through the medium of the brief, or the confused notices, which have been hitherto supplied by his friends. To this, indeed, we might submit, as to a sort of destiny, were it certain that the zeal of his opponents had succeeded in consigning the whole of his compositions to the flames. But though their familiar designation, as inquisitors of heretical pravity, was far from being assumed in vain, the Wycliffe manuscripts still extant are happily sufficient to afford a complete illustration of his character and doctrines.

The only writer who may be said to have attempted a Life of Wycliffe, is Mr. Lewis, a clergyman, who about a century since was "Minister of "Meregate." But that gentleman concluded his labours, regretting that his opportunities for examining the works of the Reformer were such as of necessity to render his acquaintance with them imperfect. So feebly also, from various causes, have his very laudable intentions been executed, that his book, which few persons have been known to read, would seem to be rarely consulted, except

by the enemies of Wycliffe, as their best authority when employed in traducing him. It would have grieved the honourable mind of that writer, to have known that such a use would be made of his labours ; but this is the event. And, unhappily, the persons who thus avail themselves of his defects, so as to make him appear a party in the work of accusation, are enabled to do so, without being exposed to all the consequences of a disingenuousness with which they certainly are chargeable.

To myself, Mr. Lewis's narrative could afford but a very limited aid, as it became my determination in making my collections with a view to the present Work, to examine the Reformer's manuscripts, so as to become immediately possessed of whatever information those voluminous productions might supply. To acquire this familiarity with writings which are so widely scattered, and where every sentiment is clothed in a character, and mostly in a dialect so long since obsolete, was a point which demanded an exercise of patience. It was strictly necessary that considerable intervals should be passed at both Universities : that access should be obtained to the manuscript libraries of Lambeth Palace, and Trinity College, Dublin : and that much time should be spent in consulting the valuable documents in the British Museum. Nor is it until more than two thousand miles have been traversed for this object, and some extended portions of time have for some years been devoted to it,

that I have ventured to claim the attention of the public on a subject so important as the character of the Father of the Reformation. How far the result of these efforts may equal the expectations of my readers, is a question on which I shall not be supposed to be indifferent. I have failed, however, in the object which I have pursued with some solicitude, if these volumes be not found to contain a faithful detail of all the facts which may be known as pertaining to the Reformer's history; accompanied too with whatever of illustration may be brought to them from his writings. In addition to which, I trust the story of his life, and particularly the chapter immediately following it, will be found to present a complete view of his various opinions, as they exist in the series of his works.

The introduction to the main object of these volumes consists of three chapters; the first, relating to the rise and character of the Papal System; the second, to the state of the Protestant Doctrine on the continent, from the fall of the empire to the opening of the fourteenth century; and the last, to the Ecclesiastical Establishment, and the state of society in England, previous to the appearance of Wycliffe. The history of the contest so long perpetuated between the advocates of a corrupted, and of a purer Christianity, is resumed in the Life of the English Reformer. Some observations are also offered, on the state of the church during the interval between the decease of Wycliffe and the appear-

ance of Luther. To a correct estimate of the character of Wycliffe, and of our obligation to his generous labours, it is necessary that the features of the system which he was called to oppose should be clearly perceived, together with the degree of resistance which it had previously encountered. But properly to dispose of the materials which it became important for this purpose to connect with the narrative, was a point of some difficulty. The plan of an introduction has been adopted, as favourable to the more consecutive treatment of the Reformer's history; and of the series of things, whether good or evil, which belong to his times. The comprehensive nature of the points to be investigated within the small space allotted to the preliminary chapters, and the laborious attention which has been so often conferred upon them, must serve to prevent the anticipation of novelty. Should some of the views expressed, with respect to the complicated movements detailed in that portion of the Work be thought to partake at all of that character, they have not, I trust, been hastily adopted; but accuracy, selection, and arrangement, were there the principal matters of solicitude. The first and second chapters describe the Christianity which pervaded the western nations during the middle ages: the last contemplates the same system, subject to the modifications supplied by our local history.

In following the stream of events which issued in the establishment of the papal power, I have been

guided chiefly by Catholic writers. Where these have failed, I have restricted myself to such authorities as, on the questions with which they are connected, will be in general acknowledged by the Protestant reader as decisive. With respect to the churches of the Reformation, now under the protection of the British Government, it is certain that Wycliffe should be considered as the parent of them all, rather than as the partisan of either. In conformity with this view of his character, while stating among his opinions many which must prove unacceptable to various existing denominations, and adding, as no less due to his memory and to the reader, the reasonings on which such opinions were founded, I have been concerned to rest the claims of the Reformer on the gratitude of each religious body discarding the authority of Rome, upon grounds which the whole have agreed to venerate as sacred. If I have any where violated this rule, it has not been from design. In English history, Wycliffe is known as the first man who dared to advocate the free circulation of the scriptures in the vernacular tongue, the unalienable right of private judgment, and our complete deliverance from the wiles and oppressions of a papal priesthood; uniting with these excellencies all the elements of that enlightened piety which adorned the christian profession in its purer ages. The reader who may be capable of regarding these as trivial things, because the mind which proceeded thus far, did not adjust itself with more precision to the delicate frame-

work of that faith or polity on which his own partialities have been conferred, is certainly one with whom the Author can have no sympathy.

It will be seen that in the extracts introduced from Wycliffe's English pieces, the orthography and a few obsolete terms have been discarded, and that the taste of the modern reader has been in some farther degree consulted. This liberty with the Reformer's language has been taken from a persuasion that without it the passages inserted would fail to receive the attention which they deserve, and which is necessary to the design of the present publication. It may be questioned also, whether it is just to Wycliffe himself, that he should be obliged to deliver his sentiments at considerable length, in the very letter of a dialect, to most readers so unintelligible and repulsive as that of our ancestors in the fourteenth century. There is a danger of mistaking the imperfections of expression for those of perception and sentiment. But though such reasons may perhaps have justified a greater liberty with the Reformer's phraseology, I wish it to be borne distinctly in mind, that in the portion of his compositions included in these volumes, the substance of his language has been in every instance carefully preserved; and with it, every, even the minutest shade of his meaning. Nine-tenths of his terms are still current among us, and his sentences are in consequence more

obsolete from their structure and orthography, than in their materials.

To persons connected with both our Universities, and to others, members of the Protestant College in the capital of the Sister Island, I might express my obligations. But these are no where more serious, than as conferred by the kindness of the Venerable the Archdeacon of Richmond, who, as Rector of Wycliffe, has afforded me every encouragement in prosecuting my object, and has rendered me an important service by the loan of the valuable picture, from which the engraving prefixed to this volume is taken. Dr. Zouch, a former Rector, bequeathed this painting to his successors, with the following notice appended to it: “Thomas Zouch, A. M. formerly Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and Rector of Wycliffe, gives this *original* picture of the great John Wycliffe, a *native* of this parish, to his successors, the Rectors of Wycliffe, who are requested to preserve it as an heirloom to the Rectory House.” Sir Antonio More was in England during the reign of Philip and Mary. Dr. Zouch possessed considerable information respecting the history of this painting, but a glance is sufficient to place its claims beyond doubt.

In leaving the result of my obscure industry with the reader, it is not without feeling that I have much depending on his candour. But it was a

conviction that the labours of Wycliffe were more nearly connected with our religious independence, and with the benefits attending it, than is generally supposed; and particularly, that many of the reproaches cast upon his name were unmerited, which led me to make his character the subject of investigation. Every step in my inquiries has served to convince me that on these points my impressions were correct. Compared with the most illustrious of the men who during the sixteenth century adopted so much of his creed, he will be found to be the equal of the greatest, and the superior of most. Had his career been far less efficient, it will be remembered that the struggle at Thermopylæ does not affect us less because it was a failure. And if many of the questions which occur very frequently in his writings, are now in a great measure obsolete; the man who can be indifferent to the steps by which his liberties were acquired, has scarcely learnt to value them as he ought.

P R E F A C E

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE notices bestowed on the present Work from the periodical press, have been quite as numerous, and much more favourable than I had ventured to anticipate. In preparing this edition for publication, the various criticisms passed upon the former have been carefully weighed, and whether proceeding from friendly intention or otherwise, I have been concerned to profit by them. A studious revision has been extended to the whole work. Considerable pains have been taken to prevent a repetition of the typographical errors, by which the preceding edition, from a concurrence of unfavourable circumstances, was disfigured. Some collateral matters, in the second volume, have been removed from the second and fourth chapters, to the Appendix; and to facilitate a reference to the contents

of the preliminary portion of the first volume, marginal notes and dates have been attached to it.

A writer in the *British Critic*, to whom, upon the whole, I consider myself under obligation, has hinted that no labour could be expected to impart any considerable feature of novelty to the subject treated in the following pages. This tone of observation, has been adopted by a second reviewer with less caution, and with the most hostile feeling;—his critique, indeed, having nothing remarkable in it, except the indiscriminateness of its censures, and the multitude of its misrepresentations and inaccuracies,—these being about as numerous as its sentences. Nothing is more easy to assume than this depreciating style, and to some natures nothing is more agreeable. To expose its injustice, in the present instance, I shall advert in this place to a feature of these memoirs which, though of the first importance, was scarcely noticed in the former edition, from a wish to avoid invidious comparison between myself, and my respected predecessor, Mr. Lewis.

Before the publication of these volumes, the dates of the Reformer's writings were, with a few trivial

exceptions, unknown. The history of the *mind* of Wycliffe was, in consequence, a secret. Hence, his character has been the theme of endless conjecture, and almost every contradiction has been imputed to him. What I have been enabled to add to the known incidents of his life, relates chiefly to his family connexion, his early piety, and to his more private character as a christian and a village pastor. But to judge of the Reformer's conduct in the best known events of his career, it is strictly necessary that we should know his character at the precise period with which these events are connected. Nor is this point one on which it is impossible to arrive at certainty. The mind of Wycliffe was not sometimes advancing, and sometimes retrograding, as nearly all our writers seem to have supposed. As reflected in his works, it exhibits a constant progression. The Wycliffe of 1375, was a less enlightened man than the Wycliffe of 1377; and the Wycliffe of 1384, was a character in which Protestant principle had become still more ascendant. To know, therefore, what it was honest in the Reformer to say or do, at any given period, it is necessary we should know what he really thought and felt at that period. The only way, however, in which a certain judgment could be formed on such

points, was to examine the contents, and to ascertain the dates of the Wycliffe MSS.; and this labour, however necessary to a correct understanding of the subject, I found to be one to which no man, since the days of Wycliffe, had pretended to apply himself. In these volumes, the reader will find both analytical and chronological notices of the Reformer's writings, and will see, I trust, that he is possessed of the means of judging as to the *mind* of Wycliffe, in the different periods of his history, and will be thus enabled to look on the struggles of his tumultuary course, not only under an increased light, but generally under a true light, in the place of a false one.

With respect to the creed of Wycliffe, the history of which is so intimately connected with the character of his actions, it may be safely affirmed, that if it were not the half, it was certainly a very important part that had not been told us. I am not aware of an article included in it, to which some elucidation has not been supplied in these pages; while, in other instances, I have not only distinguished between the real doctrines of the Reformer, and those attributed to him, but have added considerably to what was previously known. Hitherto the

time at which his novel sentiments were first imbibed, the steps by which he arrived at his favourite conclusions, and the character of the reasoning which supported him in contending and suffering for them—all these were points on which we were either in total ignorance, or obliged to be satisfied with hints and conjectures, instead of accurate and adequate information. According to every previous account of Wycliffe, he was the same man in 1370 as in 1384, and the consequences of this capital error have been the utmost confusion and contradiction, and a serious injury to the Reformer's good name. What these volumes are as a matter of taste, I leave to the reader's decision; what they are as a collection of facts is a much humbler question, and one on which the author may be allowed to have his opinion, and to express it. I am aware that even in this view the Work has many defects, but they are such, I fear, as no labour will be able to supply.

The critic whose singular competency in his profession has been noticed, would have his readers suppose that I have shown an ungenerous concern to lessen the pretensions of "the worthy old minister of Meregate." Yet it is a fact, that in the former

edition it is not in one instance of twenty, where I have corrected the mistakes or supplied the deficiencies of Mr. Lewis, that I have made any allusion to him; and the reader who shall attend to such notes in the present edition as occur at pages 381—383 of this volume, will perhaps be of opinion that to avoid the meanness which this nameless accuser has imputed to me, I have deliberately exposed myself to much disadvantage and injury. If I have dispensed with a little of this delicacy in the present case, the change will hardly be thought to require apology. My opponent, whose courage has hitherto shown itself to be of that prudent kind which avoids the light, would perhaps do well to think again of Lord Bacon's counsel to some of his passionate contemporaries—"God grant that we may contend with other churches as the vine with the olive, which of us shall bear the first fruit; and not as the briar with the thistle, which of us is most unprofitable."

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ON THE RISE AND CHARACTER OF THE PAPAL POWER.

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IN the ancient world, the superstitions of heathen states were intimately connected with their civil polity; but the priest was, commonly, the obsequious servant of the magistrate. In the form of government established among the Gauls and Britons, this gradation of power was inverted. With them, a priestly supremacy was the object to which every civic institution was rendered tributary;¹ and this order of authority, distinguishing the political

SECT.
I.
The character of Judaism.

¹ Cæsar de Bel. Gal. vi. 13. The character of the Druidical priesthood is thus forcibly described by Edmund Burke:—"They were at once the priests, the lawgivers, and the physicians of the people, and consequently

concentrated in themselves all the respect which men have for those who heal their diseases, protect their property, or reconcile them to the divinity."—Abridgment of English History.

CHAP. I. arrangements of all the Celtic tribes, may be traced to a remote antiquity.² A similar union of the priestly office, with the highest civil dignity, was usual during the patriarchal ages; and in the code of laws subsequently adopted by the Hebrew nation, the spirit of those legal customs and religious observances, which had hitherto prevailed, was not only preserved, but made still more obvious and permanent. The Mosaic institute provided both for the secular and spiritual government of the Jewish people; it thus became at once, their civil, and their ecclesiastical law; their guide in all judicial proceedings; and their only directory of faith and worship. All its parts were delivered to them, as the will of their God; and in his name the whole was enforced. Hence the Hebrew government has been appropriately described as a Theocracy. In it, Jehovah appeared as supreme magistrate. And the design accordingly of every precept, whether relating to the ritual of the temple, or to social obligation, was to perpetuate that religious faith, and that religious homage, which were to confer on the descendants of Abraham their character as a people.³

Peculiarities of the christian dispensation.

Thus a union between secular and spiritual offices had been nurtured as in the cradle of the nations, and from the age of Moses to the advent of Messiah, religion is every where seen as forming an important branch of national polity. Hence it happened, that the gospel, in its laws of external discipline, scarcely less than in its spiritual tenets, was "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." It sought no aid from penal sanctions, attached no sanctity to places, exhibited

² The resemblance of Druidism, in its doctrines and polity, to the Oriental superstitions, has been frequently shown.—See Maurice. *Indian Antiquities*, *passim*.

³ This portion of Jewish antiquities is luminously treated by Lowman, in his volumes on the Hebrew Government and Ritual.

no pomp of ritual, provided nothing either to allure the senses, or to stimulate the ambition of the worldly. Under its influence every place became holy, and the most simple services acceptable, if connected with an approach to the Father in spirit and in truth. By its ministers, the authority of the magistrate was scrupulously honoured, as far as it respected the social interests of men; but in the labours of their own spiritual office, no local boundaries were allowed to impede their course. Its disciples also, are seen assembling with regularity for religious exercises, influenced purely by the unity of their faith, and hope, and love, and by their attachment to the volume containing the will of their departed Lord. Among these the most humble are esteemed the greatest; and the most successful in aiding the devotions of the brotherhood are most revered. The harmless custom of admitting such only to their fellowship as were prepared to make the profession which they had made, and to cultivate the temper by which they were themselves distinguished, included the whole of that power, which these communities are known to have exercised or claimed. But so closely were they united by these spiritual sympathies, as to become one in feeling under every approach of suffering, diffusing the tidings of redemption through the earth, not merely unaided by magisterial influence, but in the face of its determined opposition. Such was the conduct of the disciples of the gospel at a period when an imposing ritual, and legal sanctions, were considered essential to every act which should bear the name of a religious service. Accordingly, this total exclusion of ceremonial show from christian assemblies, was regarded by the Gentile as the evidence of atheism, and by the Jew as resulting from a state of heart no less revolting; while the religious independence which they assumed, was every where appealed to, as the certain evidence of hostility to

SECT.
I.

CHAP. Cæsar. A religion established and perpetuated, by means
 I. having in them so little resembling the coarse implements of worldly power, no kingdom had hitherto witnessed. That enlarged spirit of charity too, which led the professors of the gospel to rejoice in it, as applying its benefits to every portion of the human family, was wholly a novelty; and by disposing its first preachers to anticipate the conversion of the world to the obedience of their faith, in contempt of all worldly inducement, it has placed the character of the christian apostles before the eye of succeeding generations in a light equally singular and commanding.⁴

From the various records of primitive christianity, it appears, that such was the spirituality of the Saviour's kingdom. Nor is it to be supposed, that this marked neglect of ritual circumstance and attraction, as connected with the christian religion, and of all coercion, as the means of extending its influence, was the result of necessity rather than of principle. The Redeemer, to whom all the powers of the earth were subject, might soon have brought them into alliance with his cause. The state, therefore, in which his church is found to the age of Constantine, must be allowed to suggest, that if kings were designed from that period to become her patrons, the event was never intended to bring all the pomp and secularities of Judaism, and even more than all, into their

⁴ The reader who would see the facts in my text pleasingly narrated, may consult Fleury's Discourse on the History of the Church, to the year six hundred, and more especially his separate work on the manners of the early Christians. Dr. Barrow has treated the same topics more profoundly in his work on the Pope's Supremacy; and Mosheim, in his Commentaries on the Three First Centuries, has sometimes blended the philosophy of the latter

writer with the learning of the former. But it is in the Apologies of the Fathers, that those peculiarities of the new Economy are most vividly presented, and presented very properly, as rendering the wide diffusion of the Gospel, and its long continuance, under circumstances so unattractive, a most convincing evidence of its divine origin. See also Bingham, B. xvi. c. i. sect. 1, 2. c. ii. sect. 3. Gibbon, ii. 324. 382—386.

subsequent connexion with the christian sanctuary.⁵ To the papal hierarchy it was reserved, so completely to vitiate all the principles of the new economy, as to render it subservient to the very passions which it was intended to subdue and to destroy. From the history of that vast usurpation, it would hardly be suspected, that the Messiah had appeared to introduce a dispensation which should be emphatically designated the ministration of the Spirit; that he had declared with marked solemnity, "My kingdom is not of this world;" or, that his immediate disciples were known to boast of bringing no carnal weapons to their warfare.⁶

SECT.
I.

Ancient import of the word church.

There is nothing, indeed, in the import of the word

⁵ Dr. Barrow eloquently remarks that it is a "peculiar advantage of our religion, that as it delivereth so excellent and perfect a rule of life, so it delivereth it to us pure from any alloy embasing, free of any clog encumbering it; for that it chiefly, and in a manner only requireth of us a rational and a spiritual service, consisting in performance of substantial duties, plainly necessary or profitable; not withdrawing us from the practice of solid piety and virtue, by obligation to a tedious observance of many external rites; not spending the vigour of our minds upon superficial formalities, (or *busy scrupulosities*, as Tertullian termeth them,) such as serve only to amuse childish fancies, or to depress slavish spirits. It supposeth us men, men of good understanding, and ingenious dispositions, and dealeth with us as such, and much more such it rendereth us if we comply therewith. The ritual observances it enjoineeth are as few in number, as in nature simple and easy to perform, so evidently reasonable, very decent and very useful, apt to instruct us, able to excite us unto the practice of most wholesome duties;

which consideration showeth this doctrine to be complete, suitable to the most adult age and constitution, to the most ripe and improved capacities."—Sermon on the Excellency of the Christian Religion. With respect to that independence of the magistrate, which marked the conduct of the apostles in forming and governing the first christian societies, it should be observed, that a something resembling it had long been a peculiarity in the customs of the Jewish synagogue, and the analogy has been justly adverted to by Bishop Stillingfleet. *Irenicum*, P. ii. c. vi. sect. 9.

⁶ "Christianity," observes Dr. Barrow, "we see transformed from its original simplicity into quite another thing than it was, from a divine philosophy designed to improve the reason, to moderate the passions, and to correct the manners of men, to prepare men for conversation with God and angels, modelled to a system of politic devices, (of notions, of precepts, of rites,) serving to exalt and enrich the pope, with his court and adherents, clients and vassals."—*Treatise on the Pope's Supremacy*, p. 204.

CHAP. I. church, to denote the peculiar character of the communities to which it has long since been exclusively applied. It is synonymous with the term society; and in the writings of apostles, and of the faithful to the close of the second century, it is generally employed to designate the disciples of the Saviour, either as convening in some particular locality, or as scattered through the world. Its intermediate application to believers, as inhabitants of certain countries, but who never congregate; and to the clergy in their synods and councils, as distinguished from the laity, is of much later origin.

Influence of
the people
in the pri-
mitive
church.

In these primitive societies, a peculiar deference would be shewn to the wisdom of their inspired teachers. But apart from this special control, it is generally conceded, that in such assemblies "all the authority which belongs to such as are vested with a sovereign power," was exercised by the people. It was not, indeed, their province to enact laws, but they were required to act as the executive power with respect to those which had been committed to them, as expressing the pleasure of their Lord. On them it devolved, not only to preserve the scriptural methods of admission or exclusion with regard to the christian fellowship, but to choose their own pastors and teachers, to judge on the propriety of such regulations as were proposed for general adoption, and to determine the disputes which arose between the brethren or between the deacons and their pastors.⁷ It is, however, equally certain,

⁷ Mosheim, i. 99. Gibbon, ii. 324. iii. 282—285. To these testimonies it would be easy to add those of such writers as Lowth, Stillingfleet, and Bingham; but the verdict of Fleury and Dupin may be more decisive. That of the first may be seen in his *Discourse on the Six First Ages*, Hist. iv. 349. That of the second, in his remarks on the Epistle ascribed to Clemens Romanus, cent. i. p. 28; in his notice of

Origen, cent. iii. p. 112; and in his *Summary of Primitive Discipline*, 183. The influence of the people in episcopal elections was no where more tenaciously retained than in Italy. Nor would it be difficult to make it appear as probable, that the famous republics of that kingdom arose less from other causes, than from the customs which this ancient branch of popular authority had induced. So late as the tenth cen-

that this important feature of ecclesiastical polity was early assailed, and that after an interval it totally disappeared. Before the close of the fourth century, there were provinces in which the semblance only was preserved. Rights which had pertained to the presbyters or to the people, were now claimed by the prelates; and the authority vested in the universal church was virtually yielded to the christian emperors.⁸

SECT.
I.

One department of the change introduced at this period, is deserving of more than a passing notice. It was deemed important on the conversion of Constantine, that the zeal professed in the cause of christianity, should be found to keep pace with that which had been evinced in favour of the previous system; and it had been a prevailing sentiment of paganism, that the political safety of a nation must be in proportion to the provision made for the worship of its deities. From these plausible motives, arose the multitude of consecrated structures which were found in almost every province of the empire; and it was subsequently decreed, as an expedient to effect a wider diffusion of religious instruction, that persons erecting an edifice for the christian worship might retain as a right the appointment of its occupant. In this manner, though by slow degrees, the lands which heathenism had covered with its temples, were supplied with buildings equally numerous and costly, as the means of perpetuating the faith and worship of the gospel.⁹

Origin of
patronage.

A. D. 312—
325.

ture, an infringement of the claims of the people, on the vacancy of a bishopric, was sometimes enough to occasion a civil war; and when bishops became princes, the extension of the popular voice, from the cathedral to the senate, was easy and natural.

⁸ Mosheim, i. 348, 349. See Note [A].

⁹ Mosheim, i. 391, 395. It is not

until toward the middle of the fifth century, that Fleury records the fact which he describes as "the beginnings of the rights of patronage." The instance, however, clearly supposes the previous existence of the custom; but it is certain that the practice was not so suddenly diffused as the brief notice in Mosheim would imply.—Fleury, Hist. iii. 110.

CHAP.

I.

Its corrup-
tions.

But this transfer of the power of election from the many to the few, and from the few to the individual, however well intended, was to become an inlet to the grossest corruption. It would be pleasing to suppose, that the first pastors of the cures thus established, were nominated in the spirit of a pure christianity; and that such an order of patronage was continued through the ages which followed. But history relates, that with the greater number in that important class of persons, some earthly passion too readily supplied the place of every christian motive; and that the clergy thus appointed proved the stern abettors of a scheme, which had yielded to them their larger emolument, and increased their political power. Hence at no very distant period, their introduction to the sphere of their duties, was too commonly degraded to a point of mere secular arrangement. The decrees of provincial synods, and of general councils, from the fifth century to the age of Luther, disclose the extent and inveteracy of the evils, which were thus wedded to the ecclesiastical system. Simony, pluralities, and non-residence, were among the disorders arising from this source; and which, through so long an interval, successfully resisted every measure opposed to them. Princes, who reserved to themselves the power of such elections, frequently sold their bishoprics and abbeys to the highest bidder; while the purchasers proceeded, and with as little sense of decency, to recover the cost which had been incurred to secure their elevation, by endless exactions, as the terms of conferring the benefits of their ministry. Such benefices also as were not thus directly sold, were frequently given to some royal favourite, or in the place of pecuniary offerings. Emolument being in such cases the great attraction, the religious office was accepted with precisely the same feeling that would have accompanied the event of a civil promotion, if equally lucrative. To this example,

furnished by the highest authorities, both in the church and the state, the conduct of every lower branch of patronage would, as an event of course, be fully conformed. The loss of every just conception respecting the pastoral character, and pastoral duty, which such practices suppose, was further evident in the frequent transfer of numerous benefices to the same persons.¹⁰

SECT.
I.

In this destruction of that purely spiritual relation, which once subsisted between the christian minister and his charge; and in the strengthening of every corruption which ensued, the court of Rome performed a vigorous and effective part. In filling a vacant cure, the nomination of a lay patron depended for its efficacy on the sanction of the prelate of the diocese. Much ingenuity was subsequently employed, and with no small success, to render the approbation of the diocesan dependant on that of the pontiff; and at length, the whole right of providing for such benefices was claimed by the boundless ambition of

How invaded by the pontiffs.

¹⁰ In the language of ecclesiastical history, it is not merely the purchasing of church preferments which is branded as simony, but the exacting of money for the discharge of any spiritual office. Bingham has shown how vigorous, and how fruitless, were the efforts made to check the progress of this vice, B. xvi. c. vi. The sin which had provoked the censure of Origen, became hereditary in the papal court, Dupin, cent. iii. p. 112. x. p. 68. xi. p. 24. Fleury attributes the first purchasing of bishoprics to the sixth century, vii. p. 354. The same historian has introduced the biographer of a prelate, who, in the twelfth century, had written largely against this crime, as saying, "I much question if he ever reformed a single man. For this pernicious heresy is the most stubborn of all to remove, especially among the clergy of higher rank. They promise amendment, but they defer it

from day to day, until it becomes more easy to convert a Jew than a bishop," xii. p. 466. See also his Discourse on the Church, from A.D. 600, and Father Paul's Council of Trent, lib. vii. p. 460.; and for the expedients successively adopted to separate the episcopal elections from popular influence, Gibbon, iii. 283—285. Father Paul traces the origin of non-residence to the close of the seventh century, and exposes the deception of the canonists, who, to evade the prohibition of pluralities, contended that the number of benefices to be conferred on the same person, should be determined by his rank. He also notices the proverb which elevated cardinals to the rank of kings, and which, according to the maxim above, entitled them to the wealth of princes, Council of Trent, lib. ii. 203, 204, 231, 235.

CHAP. I. the papacy.¹¹ It was from the crown, and from the higher authorities of the church, that the most formidable opposition to these pretensions was to be anticipated. Many ages were in consequence required to make the election, first of archbishops, and then of their suffragans, dependant for validity on the papal confirmation. On the vacancy of a bishopric, princes exercised their right of nomination; the chapters claimed as their privilege, the formalities of the election; and the pope failed not to assert, that these measures, if strictly canonical, were merely preliminary, and such as must become wholly void unless followed by his sanction as univereal pastor. Disputes frequently arose between sovereigns, and the monks or canons, to whom, in each cathedral, the show of election pertained, and of these disputes the pontiffs were often selected as arbiters. Such appeals were generally made by the ecclesiastical litigants; but there were political causes too frequently constraining princes to appear as defendants, and the deference thus conceded to the papacy, usually furnished a precedent for some more authoritative interference. In descending to submit his claims to such an umpire, the monarch sometimes succeeded in conferring a solitary vacancy on his favourite; but it was effected by a process which secretly impaired the general influence of his crown. The chapters also, by their frequent appeals from the pleasure of the king to a foreign authority, contributed greatly to the increase of a power more effectively hostile to their claims. In the details of ecclesiastical history, the notice of a vacant bishopric, and the narrative of disputes among the parties adverted to, with respect to a new incumbent, follow each other with a constancy which is truly wearisome. But that invincible perseverance, so

¹¹ Dupin, cent. xiii. 155. xv. 138. Mosheim, iii. 318. Hallam, ii. 325, 326. Collier, i. 497.

long conspicuous in the policy of Rome, was in this particular but too successfully exhibited.¹² It was readily seen, that a subjection of the principal members of the hierarchy, included that of its subordinate departments. The authority of the popes once admitted in the successions of the prelacy, no new principle was required to justify an invasion of the inferior sources of wealth and power. Nor was it considered sufficient, that *vacancies* alone should be regarded as justly at the disposal of the pontiffs. By means of "provisors," benefices were secured to the papal favourites in *prospect* of vacancy, and that with the most shameless profusion. Where these encroachments were vigorously resisted, the same fraudulent purpose was often accomplished, by appointing certain ecclesiastics to livings, under pretence of holding them for the true incumbent, when regularly chosen. To complete this picture of corruption, it may be presumed, that nothing farther was required: but in the tenth, and through the two following centuries, we read of children, as gravely inducted to the cure of souls. Extensive revenues were thus secured to favoured individuals, or retained in distinguished families.¹³ Such practices, however, betray that false confidence, which is the common

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I.

¹² In 1231 and in the following year, three elections to the primacy of the English church were voided by the authority of the pontiff, and a prelate of his own nomination proved the successful candidate. Collier, i. 433, 434.

¹³ Atto, Bishop of Verceil, in the tenth century, complains of the laws of patronage as corrupted by every conceivable expedient, and concludes his lament by stating, that some princes were so infatuated as to raise infants to bishoprics, (Dupin, cent. x. p. 27, see page 11 also.) But in the following century, the papal chair was filled by

a child who had not numbered his tenth year, and it had been occupied, a century before, by a boy of sixteen. Baron. An. 925. 1033. The archbishopric of Rheims was conferred during the same period on a child of five years old, and boys of twelve were clothed with the dignity of cardinals.—Dr. White's works, preface. See also Father Paul on Benefices, c. xix. Mosheim, ii. 501, 502. and Annal. Burton, 326—328. From the last it appears, that it was a vice of this description which provoked the memorable indignation of Grosteste.

CHAP. result of successful ambition, and which, in the providence
 I. of God, is often employed to create a reverse of power
 when least expected. In this manner were the people excluded from their ancient authority in the christian church, and thus corrupt became the system of patronage to which their influence was at length completely transferred. The disorders which accompanied the decline of the empire, were viewed as loudly demanding this plausible innovation, and it was doubtless productive of very important benefits; but if the few only were capable of ruling, it must be regretted that their discernment commonly did so little for their devotion, as to render them but sorry guides to the many.

No appel-
 lant juris-
 diction in
 the primi-
 tive church.

And if the churches of primitive times possessed the influence so generally attributed to them in the election of their pastors, it would seem fair to presume, that they were deemed competent to every other function of self-government. It is no doubt true, that in the history of those voluntary associations, the powerful would sometimes be called to aid the weak; and that in various instances, the latter would have to regard themselves as the offspring of the former. Under these circumstances, the decisions of a more distinguished, or a parent church, may have been received, in certain cases, with considerable deference. In such of those fraternities as were less important, from their numbers, their wealth, or the character of their pastors, this consequence would naturally arise. It appears, however, from the testimony of men truly learned on the subject of christian antiquities—and, with respect to such points, perhaps, the most impartial—that notwithstanding this unavoidable influence of power, no feature is more conspicuous in the history of the earlier churches, than that of their freedom from all appellat jurisdiction. According to such writers as Gibbon and Mosheim, it is not until after the first century that the

authority of churches, founded by apostles, became in any case such as to involve a supremacy over others ; that on the contrary, their power was so cautiously restricted, during that period, as to leave to each community all the liberties of a separate and independent state.¹⁴

SECT.
I.

That this condition of affairs was of short duration is well known, and the causes which led to its total exclusion from the visible church, through so many centuries, are no less certain. It is in the second century, that we trace the beginning of that local union of churches, whence ecclesiastical councils have their origin.¹⁵ That a confession of faith in the doctrines of the gospel, should be exacted of every candidate for christian communion, is in no way unreasonable ; and it is certain that such confessions were among the most ancient of the means employed, to preserve the purity of the christian fellowship. It may be, that tests of this description would prove insufficient for their purpose, as the profession of the gospel became less connected with suffering. But it is proper here to remark, that the corruptions of the christian religion have usually consisted of error engrafted upon its truths. This fact will be frequently illustrated in the course of the present narrative. Thus, on the practice

Rise of ecclesiastical councils and their influence.

¹⁴ Thus decided is the language of Mosheim, i. 107. And of Gibbon, ii. 325—328. It is cited from Tertullian, by the late Regius Professor of Divinity in Cambridge, as the boast of all the orthodox churches, “that each could point out the individual to whom the superintendance of its doctrine and discipline was first committed by some one of the apostles,” and it is stated as evidently the opinion of the same father, that “all the apostolic churches were independent of each other, and equal in rank and authority.”—Dr. Key’s Ecclesiast. Hist. 236. “At first,”

observes Dr. Barrow, “every church was settled apart under its own bishops and presbyters; so as independently and separately to manage its own concerns, each was governed by its own head, and had its own laws.” The changes which followed are described as the result of “human prudence.”—Works, i. 662.

¹⁵ Mosheim, i. 107, 177. Gibbon, ii. 328, 329. The assembly at Jerusalem was that of *one* church, not of representatives from *many*. (Acts xv.) Its decisions were binding on others because those of *inspired* men.

CHAP. now under review, though pure in its origin, a frightful
I, structure of antichristian usurpation was gradually reared. By the aid of provincial synods, certain harmless creeds, which had long been limited to particular churches, were after a while extended, as the tests of orthodoxy to the several communities of a district, or a province; and by these local confederacies, the way was imperceptibly prepared for that system of priestly domination, which has been disclosed in the history of general councils.¹⁶ Over those councils, the Spirit of Truth was said to preside, and from them, as a consequence, the universal church was instructed to receive her articles of faith and rules of discipline; while the civil power became pledged to enforce their decrees, in relation to both, as infallible.¹⁷ The duty of searching the Scriptures, could not be urged upon the people, in connexion with such maxims, with any shew of consistency. In the degrading system thus introduced, they were required to think by proxy, and to adopt their religious opinions in the persons of their guides. Having no concern with the faith of the Gospel, but to receive it as thus officially defined, the word of God was naturally withdrawn from the hand of the laity, and rendered the exclusive possession of the priesthood. The light thus extinguished, the children of darkness might revel in impurity. This secreting of the key of knowledge, was strictly necessary to that ascendancy of superstition which followed; nor has its reign, in any instance, been materially broken, but as this lost property of the people has been restored. The motives which thus consigned the sacred volume to obscurity, were such as could not fail to prepare the way for those traditionary fables, which were so long to delude and enthral the nations of Christendom.

¹⁶ Bingham, X. c. iii. iv.

¹⁷ Mosheim, i. 178. 263—266. 349—351. Gibbon, iii. 301—303.

Nor was it possible that the exemption from foreign interference, which is said to have pertained to the primitive churches, should pass away alone, since the principle of subjection once admitted among them, must have contributed to establish a subordination precisely similar among their pastors. Accordingly, the terms presbyter and bishop ceased ere long to be synonymous; and if the time ever was, which I presume not to determine, when one or more from that class of men, "remarkable for piety and wisdom, ruled these small congregations in perfect harmony," and when there was no need "of precedent, or superior, to maintain concord and order, as no dissensions were known,"¹⁸ it is certain that this interval of peaceful equality was soon to reach its close. Through several generations, however, "the bishop treated his presbyters as brethren, doing nothing without their advice."¹⁹ But the distinction between the two offices was gradually extending, while out of the order of prelacy a second and a third class of dignitaries was destined to arise, and who, while zealous in support of their particular jurisdiction, were to facilitate the ultimate subjection of the church, and its clergy, to the despotism of the pontiffs. The plea of order, which had served to confirm, if not to create the distinction between the office of a bishop and that of his presbyters, was transferred in the second century, to provincial synods, and there led to the similar appointment of a president, or moderator, whence metropolitans derive their origin; and the frequency with which such assemblies were convoked, contributed to esta-

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I.

State of the hierarchy previous to the fourth century.

¹⁸ Mosheim, i. 101. 179.—That bishops and presbyters were the same both in "name and order" in the primitive church, is the doctrine of bishop Stillingfleet, (*Irenicum*, P. ii. c. vi. sec. 11.) supported by the authority of

Medina, Jerome, Austin, Ambrose, Sedulius, Primasins, Chrysostome, Theodoret, and Theophylact. Such also is the doctrine of Gibbon, ii. 324.

¹⁹ Dupin, on *Ancient Discipline*, p. 182.

C H A P. I. blish the flattering distinction which they had thus introduced. Jerusalem also was now no more, and with its temple its priesthood had departed. But the mantle of Aaron and of the Levites, it was argued, had fallen upon the ministers of the gospel. The Jewish sanctuary was in consequence eulogised, as typifying the order appropriate to the christian church; and this theory, whether embraced from ignorance, or design, was not urged in vain. Its reception was favourable to the subordinations already established among the clergy; and smoothed the way for the new distinctions, and the more secular aspect, which were soon to appear within the pale of the church.

Its establishment under Constantine.

Constantine had important reasons for assimilating the civil and religious polity of the empire; and to conform the discipline of the church, with some recent changes in the civil constitution, new gradations were required in the episcopal order. The prelates of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria, were already in some measure distinguished by their privileges. To these also the bishop of Constantinople was added, when that city became the imperial residence. These were known from the reign of the first christian emperor, by the name of patriarchs; and revered by an order of exarchs and metropolitans, their dignity harmonized with that of the four pretorian prefects which had been created by the same authority. At this period, the bishop of Rome excelled all other prelates, in opulence and splendour. But he was still subject, in common with his brethren, to the laws of the empire. A century later also, while the affairs of every diocese devolved, with few exceptions, on its bishop, all causes of general importance were determined, and every law, in relation to the church, enacted, either by the emperor, or by an ecclesiastical council convened in his name.²⁰

²⁰ The admirable Essay on the Spirit and Influence of the Reformation, by

C. Villers, which obtained the prize of the National Institute of France, is

Such were the advances of the christian hierarchy, previous to the age of Constantine, and such was the form in which it then received the imperial sanction. Among the immediate effects of that revolution, so largely productive, both of good and evil, was the secular jurisdiction of the clergy—a feature of ecclesiastical discipline too prominent in the history of the church, and too evidently including the germ of the most extravagant pretensions subsequently urged by the pontiffs, to be here overlooked. This tendency, indeed, of the motley policy so suddenly established, was, after a while, perceived; but the efforts of the magistrate to subdue the rival power which his pleasure had created, were often ineffectively made, because made too late. It will be remembered, that when the apostle of the Gentiles called upon the litigious Corinthians, to submit their differences, respecting things “pertaining to this life,” to the decision of arbiters chosen from among themselves, it was to check the first movements of strife, and to avoid the reproach incurred by the appeal of christian disputants to a pagan tribunal. His advice, however, in this instance, respected such disputes only as arose in relation to property; the law of procedure, in every case of moral delinquency, being previously known.²¹ And it is important distinctly to observe, that the office of peace-maker, as thus commended, was far from being exclusively associated with that of the christian pastor. On the contrary, the admonition of the apostle simply required, that such matters of dispute should be determined before the “saints,” and not before

S E C T.
I.
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Origin and
character of
the ecclesi-
astical juria-
diction.

followed by a masterly “Sketch of the History of the Church,” from its founder to the age of Luther. The first period, extending “from Jesus to Constantine,” is described as that of “democracy;” the second, extending from Constantine to Mahomet, is called the “oligarchy;” the third, reaching

from the death of Mahomet to the pontificate of Hildebrand, is denominated “monarchy;” and the remaining interval, to the appearance of Luther, is considered as that of “despotism.”—See Mosheim, i. 179, 180, 348—354. Gibbon, ii. 301—303.

²¹ Matt. xviii. 15—17.

CHAP. the "unjust;" and that on questions of such compara-
 I. tively small importance, the least esteemed in the church
 should be supposed competent to decide.²² It was not to
 be presumed, that appellants, especially such as had failed
 to obtain a favourable verdict, would, in every instance,
 be strictly satisfied, that the decision announced had been
 equitably formed. In such cases, if the pastor were the
 arbiter, a prejudice would be excited with regard to his
 character, injurious to every purpose of his official rela-
 tion. Aware of this fact, the apostle could hardly have
 failed to assign so unwelcome an office to the humbler
 members of the church, rather than to its accredited
 teachers; and in the hands of the brotherhood, it was an
 act of mediation which must have contributed greatly
 both to the peace and the reputation of the christian com-
 munities. By degrees, however, this branch of authority
 became inseparably connected with the pastoral office.
 This event may have been in most instances the effect of
 that confidence which was usually reposed in the christian
 shepherd by his flock; in some, it may have resulted from
 a guilty ambition; it is certain that what was thus con-
 ceded by custom, was at length demanded as a right. So
 long, however, as the arbiters in such disputes performed
 the duties of their office without emolument, and unaided
 by political power, this authority, though adventitious to
 that of the pastoral character, and in some respect at
 variance with it, was, perhaps, secure from any serious
 abuse.

But the establishment of christianity as the religion of
 A. D. 324. the empire, conferred popularity on the profession of the
 gospel. As the certain consequence of this change, the
 wealth and irreligion of avowed believers rapidly increased.
 In proportion also to this increase, were the controversies

²² 1 Cor. vi. 1—8.

which arose with regard to property, and which, as the result of previous custom, fell under the cognizance of the pastors of the church. With this change, however, another, no less considerable, was found to be connected. The magistrates of the empire were no longer pagan, but, by the existing clergy, were generally recognised as true believers; and as the ground, on which the advice of St. Paul to the Corinthians had been founded, was thus removed, the disposal of all secular causes should in justice have been restored to the secular judge. If, indeed, a private arbitration were still preferred, nothing existed to prevent an appeal to it. But it was evident, that every such decision must depend for its efficacy on those moral sanctions, which formed the sole power of the primitive church—and a more summary method of adjusting controversies was now to be embraced.

By a law of the first christian emperor, every bishop was constituted general arbitrator of such civil dissensions as arose within his diocese, or, to speak more correctly, his parish. From his sentence there remained no appeal, and the officers of justice were bound to an immediate execution of his pleasure.²³ Constantine would scarcely have attempted to connect such an office with that of the christian ministry, without the concurrence of the men on whom it was conferred. The fact of its being universally sustained by the clergy of the fourth century, is unfavourable to their pretensions as religious men. By a limited and a better class among them, the distractions introduced by this worldly occupation were feelingly deplored; but all were conformists in this respect, and the greater number with little difficulty.²⁴ It may be conceded that, the proceedings of the episcopal courts in later ages were

SECT.
I.

²³ Eusebius Vit. Constant. iv. c. 27. Sozomen, i. c. 9.

evil, and uttered some loud complaints against it.—Fleury, ii. 909. iii. 147.

²⁴ Augustine professed to feel this

CHAP.
I.

more fixed and equitable than those conducted by the secular officers; but this disparity could not have been strikingly observable in the fourth century, when the sacred scriptures were by no means unknown, and when barbarism had accomplished but little toward demolishing the fabric of Roman jurisprudence. It should be remembered too, that the verdicts of each court were enforced by the same coercive weapons, so that no *religious* objection could possibly be urged against appeals to the one, which would not apply with equal force to the other. While the general equity of the pastoral decisions formed the sole ground of their influence, the various arts of corruption were happily excluded. But removed from this honourable footing, and entrenched amid the sanctions of imperial law, their character was wholly changed. Christian pastors thus became, but in a sense never intended by their Lord, a royal priesthood, annexing the power of the sword to that of their spiritual office. Nor is it easy to determine the extent of the encroachments which would speedily have followed, if a powerful check had not arisen in the rival vigilance of the courts whose province was thus invaded.²⁵

By the emperor Theodosius it was farther decreed, that a civil cause might be carried to the bishop's court in the first instance, at the pleasure of either party; and that it might be removed thither at the same option, in any stage

A. D. 380—
395.

²⁵ The emperor Valens appointed the clergy to determine the price of vendible commodities, a measure which certainly bespeaks a confidence in their equity, but which also implies a talent for secular pursuits that could hardly have existed along with a proper regard to their spiritual obligations. Mr. Gibbon has named the aversion of the early christians from the matters of civil government, as in-

parting a collected energy to their religious movements. In later ages the complaints of the secular nobility respecting the obtrusion of churchmen into civil offices were often urged; but for many centuries with but a very partial measure of success.—Decline and Fall, ii. 322. Fleury's Discourse on the Church, from A. D. 600.

of its pleadings before the civil magistrate.²⁶ From this strange increase of power, it may be inferred that the efficiency of churchmen in their new vocation, had been such as to command the royal confidence. But it was deemed important by Arcadius and Honorius, to whom the supreme authority next descended, more accurately to define the limits of episcopal jurisdiction, and to make every appeal to the clerical tribunal, dependant, as formerly, on the concurrence of both parties. By this provision a feeble check was given to the increasing usurpation; but the customs which the former statute had introduced, were not to be easily eradicated; and from the history of subsequent princes it appears, that after an interval its disastrous authority was fully restored. Courts were, indeed, established to determine such causes as were of a mixed nature, and their existence discloses a mutual jealousy. But if the secular judge was admitted to these tribunals, it is certain that in these also the episcopal authority commonly prevailed. Various also were the expedients by which causes said to be overlooked or rejected by the magistrates, were made to devolve on the more scrupulous equity of the ecclesiastical officers. By such steps an amount of legal occupation became connected with the pastoral relation, rendering a knowledge of law every where of so much more importance to a bishop than the study of his bible, as to convert the disgraceful fact into a proverb.²⁷

Thus a union between priestly and judicial power, was not more familiar to the barbarian tribes by which the

²⁶ This edict has been attributed to Constantine, but Godefroy has proved that it is of a later origin. That it was fairly introduced into the code of Theodosius is doubtful; but from thence it was extracted by Charlemagne.—Gibbon, iii. 293. Hallam, ii. 10. Lingard, ii. 295. That appeals to the bishop's

court depended previously on the consent of both parties, is evident from the Novels of Valentinian, iii. 12. and from Sozomen, i. 9.

²⁷ See the luminous Discourse of Father Paul on this subject, in the fourth book of the Council of Trent.

CHAP. I. empire was dissolved, than it had long been to the members of the christian church. As a consequence, this perilous combination survived those deep convulsions, which gave existence to the states of modern Europe, and ended in their adoption of the christian worship. In a gothic council at Toledo, convened before the close of the sixth century, including more than seventy prelates, and conducted under the royal sanction, we find the judges of the people admonished to appear before the yearly convocation of the clergy, to receive official instructions from the mouth of the bishops as their appointed overseers.²⁸ Two centuries later, the obnoxious edict of Theodosius was re-enacted by Charlemagne, and became a law, through the various nations owning his authority.²⁹ It is also well known, that under the reign of paganism among the northern nations, the judgment of excommunication separated its victim alike from religious and from civil privileges; that to be accounted impious, was to be exposed to the miseries of outlaw. From the age of Constantine the successors of the apostles had been too much accustomed to pronounce the sentence which they knew would be followed by confiscations or imprisonment, to feel shocked by this connection between religious censures and civil penalties. Soon was it adopted by them in the whole of its extent, and thus the present and the future, with respect to their votaries, was placed in complete subjection to their will.³⁰ The principle, also, once admitted, that a religious delinquency called for a suspension of civil rights, was easily extended, until monarchs were deposed from their thrones, and kingdoms were bartered at pleasure by a race of haughty priests.³¹

Abuses of
the ecclesi-
astical juris-
diction.

A. D. 312—
325.

²⁸ Fleury, iv. 278, 279.

²⁹ Capital. Reg. Franc. vi. 366.

³⁰ Mosheim, ii. 225, 226. Fleury, iii. 141, 145.

³¹ The earliest exercise of this power,

was in the deposition of Vamba, a king of the Visigoths, by the council of Toledo in 661. The next was in the case of Louis the Debonaire—two centuries later.—Fleury's Discourse, A.D. 600.

An interval would be required to prepare the way for a frequent application of these spiritual censures to rulers and to sovereigns. But to punish the aberrations of the multitude, and to overlook those of their superiors, would have been to admit a distinction in every view hazardous. It might have been sincerely pleaded, that a strict subjection of the magistrate to the authority of the penitential canons, would be at variance with the freedom of his peculiar administration. It is certain, however, that the motives which for a while secured the person of the emperors from serious rebuke, sometimes afforded but a feeble protection to offenders in the subordinate offices of government. St. Athanasius pronounced the sentence of excommunication on one of the ministers of Egypt.³² The prelate Synesius followed his example, and in the person of the president Andronicus, subdued a more formidable adversary.³³ But among the earlier and the more successful champions of the power which became ere long so much the subject of abuse, a pre-eminence must be given to the devout St. Ambrose. By the authority of that excellent man, the emperor Theodosius was excluded from the altar of the faithful; and the members of the christian commonwealth were edified by the novel spectacle of a prince assuming the garb of public contrition, as the exacted atonement for public crime.³⁴ Nor was it deemed sufficient that the censures of the church should be thus fearlessly applied, connected as they had every where become with the abhorrence of earth and heaven. The curse, with all its consequences, was gradually extended from the individual to his family and adherents; and this practice, though it secured the

SECT.
I.

A. D. 370.

A. D. 412.

A. D. 390.

A. D. 412.

³² Baron. An. 370. where the cardinal's authority is an epistle of St. Basil.

³³ Fleury, iii. 143, 144.

³⁴ Gibbon, v. 69—72. The doors of the Basilica Ambrosiana, are still

reverted by the Italians, as those closed by the inflexible saint against the supplicating emperor. Eustace's Tour, iv. 26.

CHAP. I. punishment of the innocent with the guilty, became the
 ——— ground work of the well known sentence of interdict—an
 ecclesiastical weapon, by which, in the western church, the tenants of the baron were often made to groan under the chastisement incurred by their lord; and nations were doomed to sackcloth for the iniquities imputed by pontiffs to their kings.³⁵

Clerical ex-
 emptions.

While the clergy were thus active in establishing that species of jurisdiction, the principles of which were soon to be wrested in support of every papal pretension, it becomes proper to inquire how the delinquencies of ecclesiastics themselves, were to be in any measure corrected. The civil controversies which arose between churchmen, would be, of course, referred to the decision of their own order. This custom may not have furnished the strongest incentive to religious circumspection, but it was favourable to the influence of the clergy, as it preserved the faults of men, separated to the services of religion, from being too nearly scrutinized by the people. On this ground the practice was earnestly commended by Constantine;³⁶ and by the emperor Justinian it was further decreed, that every civil suit, in which either party were a clergyman, should devolve on the episcopal tribunal.³⁷ This privilege once secured, would be cautiously maintained; and in the subsequent establishment of the christian worship among the western nations was not to be forgotten. We have seen that by Charlemagne, this important claim was sufficiently respected. Nor is there the least room, from this period, to question the independence, or the entire competency, of the spiritual courts, with respect to any contempt of the canons on the part of the clergy, or in relation to such civil controversies among them, as the prelates were empowered to decide in behalf of the laity.

A. D. 527—
 565.

A. D. 800

³⁵ Fleury, iii. 143, 144.

719, 750.

³⁶ Fillmont. Mem. Eccles. tom. iii.

³⁷ Novel. LXXIX. §. LXXXIII.

In subsequent periods we perceive the utmost ingenuity employed to connect almost every legal suit with the court of the bishop; while the clergy themselves as constantly plead a total exemption from the authority of the secular judge. Questions relating to tithes, testaments, advowsons, and every form of civil contract, were at length as much connected with the jurisdiction, still designated spiritual, as those of marriage, perjury, or scandal.³⁸ That various of these matters were unknown to the episcopal courts during the reign of the first christian emperors is certain; and it is equally evident, that the criminal clergy were not then protected by the sanctity of their order, from the known penalties of criminal law.³⁹ The steps which led to this increase of power, have been variously related, and are still the subject of debate.⁴⁰ But it appears, that from the days of the great St. Basil, the canons of the church began to assume a systematic form, and to be recognized in various compilations as a code distinct from that of the empire.⁴¹ When the latter dis-

SECT.
I.

A. D. 360.

³⁸ Berrington's Henry, ii. 67—69. Lingard, Hist. ii. 302.

³⁹ Ibid. 297. Gibbon, iii. 294. Berrington's Henry, ii. 67—69.

⁴⁰ Mr. Gibbon's account of the rise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, is derived principally from Giannone's Civil History of Naples, and from Fleury's Institutes of the Canon Law. He was not, however, to be informed, that the first writer was a jealous civilian, the second what is now meant by a moderate catholic, iii. 293. From a novel of Justinian it appears, (cxxii. 21.) that a clerk, convicted of a criminal offence, was not to undergo the penalty incurred until deprived of his religious office by his spiritual superior. Should the superior refuse to perform this unwelcome service, the affair was submitted to the re-judgment of the sovereign. It thus became law, that no

man should suffer a criminal penalty as a *clergyman*. On this fact it would not be difficult, in the process of time, to build the presumption, that *ecclesiastics* should be regarded as exempt from the authority of criminal law. The principal changes, accordingly, which were introduced in subsequent ages, consisted in submitting such questions to the re-judgment of the pontiff, and not to that of the sovereign; and in rendering every such offender accountable, in the first instance, to the ecclesiastical judge, instead of leaving the sentence dependant on his sanction merely in the issue. By the authority on which the first examination of the accused was thus made to devolve, the farther interference of a secular judge, would, as a thing of course, be commonly superseded.

⁴¹ Beveridge, tom. ii. 17—151.

CHAP. I. the former became increasingly important, as constituting almost the only written law. By the clergy, indeed, certain forms from the ancient jurisprudence were still preserved, and these connected with their ecclesiastical regulations, formed a legal authority sufficiently comprehensive to embrace every duty of the confessional, and to decide on every dispute placed within the cognizance of the bishop's court. To those religious sanctions which, amid so much convulsion, sustained the authority of the canon law, the continuance of these fragments of Roman legislation must also be ascribed. The code of Justinian, formed from the customs of a civilized people, was not to be appreciated by the rude tribes to which the states of modern Europe owe their origin. With such hordes, mandates enforced by the terrors of superstition would alone possess the authority of law ; and, as a consequence, the sceptre of the nations virtually passed into the hand of the clergy.⁴² Hence the higher clergy soon became known as an order less distinguished by devotion, than as forming the usual cabinet of princes. Declared also to be lords both spiritual and temporal, and subject to the usual obligations of knight service, as the tenure of their possessions, the jurisdiction of the bishop became just as secular as that of the baron. To every subordinate office in the state the clergy were eligible, and if they might not aspire to the possession of the crown, it was warmly contended, that the emblem of the highest civil dignity could be lawfully received but from their hand, and be transferred, but by their authority. In the ceremony of coronation, to administer the consecrating oil, was the official duty of the principal ecclesiastic of the realm ; and the revival of this Jewish or Pagan custom, greatly subserved the pretensions adverted to.⁴³

⁴² Mr. Gibbon has justly remarked, that the Latin Clergy "erected their tribunal on the ruins of the civil and common law," iii. 293.

⁴³ Moshcim. ii. 231. Father Paul's

Discourse on Spiritual Jurisdiction, Council of Trent, lib. iv. Fleury's Discourse on the Church, from the year 600. Gibbon, ix. 151.

SECTION II.

GENEROSITY OF PRIMITIVE BELIEVERS.—WEALTH OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH, ITS SOURCES AND VARIOUS APPLICATIONS.—ITS INCREASE AND PERVERSIONS.—SECULAR CHARACTER ASSUMED BY THE CLERGY.—ELEVATION OF CHURCHMEN TO OFFICES OF STATE.—CELIBACY OF THE CLERGY.—RISE OF MONACHISM.—CAUSES WHICH FAVOURED ITS DIFFUSION.—ITS CORRUPTION.—RISE OF THE MENDICANTS.—PAGAN CUSTOMS INCORPORATED WITH THE CHRISTIAN RITUAL.—IMITATIVE CHARACTER OF THE PAPAL POLICY.—WORSHIP OF IMAGES.—PRAYER FOR THE DEAD.—TRANSUBSTANTIATION.—CONNECTION BETWEEN THE POWER OF A VICIOUS CLERGY, AND THE VIRTUES OF THEIR PREDECESSORS.

AN increase of ecclesiastical wealth, was inseparable from that progress of ecclesiastical power which has been briefly narrated. In the earlier state of the church, no peculiarity is more observable than her contempt of riches. A community of goods, more generous than that conceived by the imagination of Plato, was realized among the first christians at Jerusalem. Impelled by the zeal which their new faith had inspired, the disciples sold their possessions, and resigning the whole of their wealth to a general treasury, the poor and the affluent shared in the same distribution.¹ We have no evidence, indeed, that this example of self-denial was enjoined by the apostles. It was unknown in the churches subsequently formed by their ministry, and ceased even at Jerusalem, after the interval of about twenty years. These circumstances seem to warrant the opinion of its being a practice, which the prudence of inspired teachers would have led them to

SECT.
II.

Generosity
of primitive
believers.

¹ Acts iv. 32—37.

CHAP. I. discountenance; but in which they yielded for a time, as to the first impulse of zeal in their converts.

Wealth of the primitive church. Its sources.

It is plain, however, that while believers, whether of Jewish or of Gentile origin, were exhorted to diligence in business, and encouraged to preserve to themselves the disposal of their property; there was still a general fund to be perpetuated in every church by the free contributions of its members. It was the advice of the apostle of the Gentiles that every man should reserve a weekly offering for this treasury, more or less in its value, "as the Lord had prospered him."² The moral claims of the individuals to be assisted by these collections, formed the only security for a constant supply. It was indeed a mode of providing for the needy, which would vary with the numbers or the opulence of particular societies; but it is pleasing to observe, that amid a diversity of circumstances, the faithful were one in spirit; and, that while the humblest community was commonly disposed to struggle for its own independence, a generous sympathy failed not to be evinced, on the part of the strong, in favour of the weak, or the truly necessitous. The names of five apostles occur in the New Testament, as inculcating this fellowship of churches; and their appeals in support of this species of union were not made in vain, either at Jerusalem or at Corinth, nor among those who had received the gospel in Galatia, in Macedonia, or Achaia.³

A. D. 97.

And various applications.

Such was the only source of revenue to the christian commonwealth, in its primitive state. The purposes to which its spontaneous offerings were first applied, whether in some distant society or in that with which they had originated, were the support of the ministry, and the

² 1 Cor. xvi.

³ Acts xi. Rom. xv. 1 Cor. xv. 2 Cor. viii. ix. Father Paul on Benefices, c. iii. Eusebius, Hist. iv. c. 23. The facts recorded by the last writer

prove, that the benevolent spirit of primitive christianity, was not extinct among the faithful of the imperial city, in the latter half of the third century.

relief of the poor. Thus the purse intrusted to Judas was to be employed. After the death of the traitor, the office which he had sustained devolved on the apostles generally; but it was soon found to be at variance with the spiritualities of their special calling; and was, in consequence, wholly relinquished to an order of men ordained by their authority, and since perpetuated in the church, under the name of deacons. By this arrangement, the apostles, and such as were called with them to the office of preaching, were enabled to give themselves wholly to that occupation; leaving the providing for the table of the minister, and for that of the poor, to the fidelity of men who were thus separated to that subordinate, but important vocation.⁴ Through a considerable period, these officers are honourably known as the almoners of the faithful; and at no distant interval we find, that it was not only to weaker churches, nor merely to the poorer members of their immediate communion, that they were empowered to extend the proofs of that fraternal charity which must ever spring from a sincere reception of the christian faith. It is probable, that the exposed infant often lived to honour the church as a preserver and a better parent;⁵ while from her sympathy with suffering,

SECT.
II.

⁴ Acts vi. For the different opinions of the learned, respecting the *origin* and *functions* of the deacon's office, the reader may consult Mosheim's Commentaries on the Affairs of the Christians, i. 203—215.

⁵ Before the close of the fourth century, this monstrous custom, which had been exceedingly prevalent in the empire, was wholly abolished by its christianity. In this effort of philanthropy the names of Valentinian, Valens, and Gratian, occur with honour, Cod. Theod. Lib. x. lit. 27. p. 188. Their known abhorrence of infanticide was pleaded on behalf of the first christians, by their eloquent apologists, as re-

futing the pagan calumny of their meeting in secret places to slaughter and devour young children. Athenagorus, an Athenian convert, exclaims, "How could we be supposed to kill children, born into the world, who charge women with murder that cause abortion? or be capable of murdering them who think it criminal to expose our children? How could we imbrue our hands in the blood of innocents who abstain from witnessing the combats of gladiators with each other, or with beasts, as contrary to our feelings." Athenagorus lived during the latter half of the second century. See Ryan's Effects of Religion, 39—41.

CHAP. I. the wretch doomed to the mines, frequently obtained the means of ransom; and the slave passed from being the property of his master, to enjoy the sweets of liberty.⁶

Its increase
and perversions.

This honourable application of the treasure received, secured a constant liberality; nor is it until the commencement of the third century, that we meet with any serious complaint of injustice, or partiality, as affecting the usual distribution. It is deserving of notice, too, that the period remarkable for those complaints, is also distinguished by the effort to exact, as a right, and on the authority of the levitical law, the contributions which had been hitherto solicited, on the more generous terms of christian equity, or of christian benevolence.⁷ During this period, however, the wealth of many churches was considerable; such indeed, as to attract the cupidity of the emperors, and, in the judgment of Father Paul, to form the principal cause of the persecutions which arose after the death of Commodus.⁸ To colour their rapacity, it was asserted by pagans, that the opulence of christian societies was derived from abusing the fears of their votaries, and, that parents were often induced to beggar their offspring that they might enrich such fraternities. But such statements, whether occurring in the ancient writers, or copied by modern historians, should be received with caution; though it will, at the same time, be proper to remember, that the persecution under Decius is expressly attributed by Cyprian to the degeneracy of the church; and to this, as particularly evinced in the altered application of its revenues. Many of the deacons were more than suspected of dishonesty; and the clergy not only began to relinquish their primitive custom of living in common; but, to support their separate establish-

⁶ Father Paul on Benefices, c. iii. Cyprian, Epist. 62. The eloquent philanthropy of St. Ambrose may be seen in Dupin. cent. iv. p. 207.

⁷ Gibbon, ii. 336, 337. Father Paul on Benefices, c. iv.

⁸ Ibid.

ments, were generally securing to themselves that portion of the offerings of the people which, until now, had been applied to meet the necessities of the flock, or to extend the circle of its charities.⁹ Still, in judging of these matters, much should perhaps be deducted from the assertions of pagan antagonists on the one hand, and from the declamation of inflexible moralists, among believers themselves, on the other.¹⁰ The system of voluntary supply, is strongly opposed to prevalent abuse; and it is certain, that to this period, the property of the church was not only derived from its primitive source, but that it still consisted wholly of moveables. The apprehension of a speedy dissolution to the world, was admitted by many of the early christians, and is supposed to have operated against attaching lands, or real estates, to their particular societies. But the laws of the empire, which forbid the conferring of such property on any corporation of its subjects, without a sanction from the prince, or the senate, was a more effective check on the introduction of such possessions.¹¹ During the latter half of the third century, the hand of persecution was considerably stayed, and the number of avowed believers was greatly increased. But the absence of the test which suffering had supplied, was inseparable from the growth of insincerity; and in the year 302, certain estates, which had been acquired by the church in this interval of repose, became the spoil of the emperors Dioclesian and Maximian. Eight years later, the authority of Maxentius was employed to restore to the christians the possessions

SECT.
II.

⁹ Gibbon, ii. 336, 337. Father Paul on Benefices, c. iv.

¹⁰ Cyprian in his treatise, "De Lapsis," has made the most gloomy disclosures of the degeneracy, which in his day had begun to pervade the church community: and the whole is attributed to a gradual departure from scriptural instruction and precedent,

and to a love of wealth which had arisen from possessing it.

¹¹ These laws, as published in 290, were but a re-enactment of similar provisions. The following is a rescript of Dioclesian: "Collegium si nullo speciali privilegio subnixum sit, hære ditatem capere non posse, dubium non est." *Leges, De Heredit. Instituentis.*

CHAP. of which they had been recently bereft; and his conduct,
 I. whether arising from policy or from attachment to the
 sufferers, was soon imitated and surpassed by Constantine,
 a prince on whom historians have conferred the epithet of
 the Great. Under the reign of this emperor, the devout
 were permitted, and even encouraged, to bequeath their
 property to christian uses; and the clergy were exempt
 from those civil services, which devolved on every other
 order of the state.¹² These events favoured that inde-
 pendence of popular bounty and opinion, which it became
 the ambition of churchmen to obtain, but which was not
 to be secured, except by a process which merged the
 christian pastor in the political superior, and proved the
 inveterate foe of that influence which they were still
 anxious to preserve.

Such however was the confidence hitherto placed in that
 important class of men, that the property bequeathed to
 the church, was left in very general terms, and was ap-
 plied at their discretion, either to the relief of the necessi-
 tous, or to the variety of purposes that might be de-
 scribed as religious. The practice was unwise, inasmuch
 as it added to the sources of temptation; and its abuse
 may have suggested the later custom of defining the par-
 ticular application of every bequest.¹³ It is also evident,
 that the exemption of the clergy from the usual burdens
 of the state, was highly conducive to the wealth of their
 order;¹⁴ and, that the power of the magistrate, which had
 been connected in the manner described, with their office,
 became another source of dangerous emolument. But
 every increase of wealth served to strengthen the passion

¹² Several chapters in Eusebius are occupied with notices of Constantine's generosity to the church. Among other arrangements, the property which had been confiscated in the period of persecution, devolved on the church if

the parties had perished without heirs and without a will. Vide Constant. c. 36.

¹³ Father Paul on Benefices, c. v.

¹⁴ Cod. Theod. De Episc. et Eccles. lib. ii.

for farther acquisition, and before the close of the fourth century, the state interposed once and again, to check the progress of this malady. Measures were adopted to prevent deluded parents conferring their property on the church, to the injury of their offspring; while the clergy were expressly prohibited all unnecessary intercourse with widows or orphans, and forbidden to receive any real estates from females, or even moveables, above a certain value, either directly, or otherwise. St. Jerome acknowledges with grief, that laws reflecting so injuriously on the clerical character, were nevertheless required.¹⁵ St. Augustine, also, was so far displeased with the methods frequently adopted to increase the wealth at the disposal of the clergy, and so disturbed by the cares inseparable from a conscientious distribution of it, as to sigh for a return of the days when ecclesiastical endowments were unknown; and when the ministers of religion received their portion, but from the produce of the soil, or from the alms of the devout.¹⁶

Still the age of Augustine was one of severe integrity, when compared with many which followed. Nor are the causes of the increasing degeneracy unknown. When the barbarian tribes descended from the wilds of the north, the elements of their ancient idolatry were nearly all infused into the forms of that christianity which they so speedily adopted. The superstitious veneration, also, with which they had been taught to regard their former priesthood, appears to have been readily transferred to their new instructors; and together with their heedless

SECT.
II.

A. D. 390—
430.
Secular character assumed by the clergy

¹⁵ Fleury observes, respecting this law, that "it was disgraceful yet necessary." The words of Jerome may be seen in *Epist. ad Eustoch.*

¹⁶ *Possid. Vita August. c. iv.* The following also are the words of the Bishop of Hippo, in a sermon on a text in *Leviticus*: "Omnes decimæ terræ

sive de frugibus, sive de pomis arborum Domini sunt." Thus also he writes in a sermon on a text from *Esdras*, "Primitias ciborum nostrorum, et poma, omnis ligni, vindemiæ quoq; ; et olei, afferemus sacerdotibus. Ipsi Levitæ decimus occipient operum nostrorum."

CHAP. credulity, and their hereditary faith in the virtue of ob-
 I. lations, as an atonement for sin, presented temptations to
 abuse of the most powerful description. The clergy in the mean while had become wholly intent, with but few exceptions, on the increase of their wealth, and of their political influence; and the result is seen in those aspects of society, which form the chief reproach of the middle ages.

It was before the close of the fifth century, that the custom obtained of dividing the revenue of each bishopric into four parts. The first was secured to the bishop; the second to his clergy; the third was allotted to the repairs of the church; and the fourth to the poor. This nominal division of ecclesiastical property, is not so remarkable from any benefit conferred by it, as from the extent to which it was adopted, and its long continuance in the church. As the division required was not that of four equal parts, but of parts to be extended or diminished by local circumstances, the arrangement could present but a very partial check to the cupidity or caprice of individuals. But, as the distinction between a bishopric and a parish, which for a considerable interval was unknown, began to obtain; the various emoluments, arising from the lesser cures, were gradually withdrawn from the episcopal fund, until that fund came to be regarded as pertaining but to the bishop, and to the clergy of the cathedral church. The advantages of possessing a parochial, as distinguished from the collegiate clergy, had become evident, before the custom of tithes was generally admitted.¹⁷ That the

¹⁷ From the councils of the fourth century, it appears that the appointment of a bishop, or merely a priest as the resident ecclesiastic of any town or district, was a circumstance to be regulated by the extent of the population. The reason assigned for this

custom by the council of Sardica in 347 is, that the dignity of bishops might be preserved. By such steps the parochial became distinguished from the conventual clergy. Fleury, ii. 166.

christian ministry is entitled to this portion of aid, had been asserted by certain fathers, previous to the age of Constantine;¹⁸ but the honour of first securing this important branch of revenue by legal enactment, and spiritual censures, was reserved for a council of the Gallic clergy, toward the close of the sixth century.¹⁹ From that period, this mode of contribution became a frequent topic of pulpit discourse, and the matter of ceaseless regulation in clerical assemblies; and the custom once introduced was after awhile extended from Gaul, to every province of Christendom. And if but few additions were to be made to the various sources of opulence described, these were in themselves such as might be rendered increasingly productive.²⁰

As the ignorance of the laity increased, the offices of state, which had been frequently conferred on the more gifted of the clergy, became the almost exclusive possession of men from that order; while the progress of superstition was ever conceding some farther emolument to the officiating priest, whose gradation of spiritual benefits was studiously converted into articles of merchan-

SECT.
II.

Elevation of churchmen to offices of state.

¹⁸ Gibbon, ii. 337.

¹⁹ See the Council of Mascon in 585. Dupin has omitted the threat of excommunication, but Fleury has inserted it.

²⁰ Father Paul remarks that the sermons of the eighth and following centuries consisted of little else than eulogy on the virtues of paying this portion of produce to the clergy, and that the claim was extended from predial to personal tithes, not excepting the gains of the workman and the pay of the soldier.—(On Benefices, c. xi.) It was in the following terms that a preacher in the age of Charlemagne addressed his flock: “Nec debetis expectare ut presbyteri et clerici alii decimas vobis requirant, sed cum bona

voluntate vos ipsi sine admonitione debetis donare et ad domum presbyteri ducere.” Capitularies, Appendix, 1376. Also lib. vi. c. 192, where the instructions given to priests fully warrant the statement of Father Paul. The grossness of this practice in the Gallican church called forth the indignant rebuke of Alcuin, Epist. vii. apud Mabillon, tom. 4. “It was customary with women of quality to leave their beds with all their accompanying ornaments, as knights did their horses and arms, to the church in which they were buried. This usage was like many other practices changed by the clergy into obligation and law.”—Note to Partenopex de Blois, p. 45.

CHAP. I. dise.²¹ The worldly office of a bishop might be vindicated, by appealing to the secular features of the pontifical jurisdiction; and it will presently appear, that the system of clerical exaction, which advanced along with it, and which extended oppression in so many forms to the most defenceless members of the church, arose in no small degree from the merciless demands of the ecclesiastic, who was still revered as its head. The admission, however, of the ministers of religion to the cabinets of princes, and the influence conceded to them in legislative assemblies, was not the most forboding circumstance resulting from their growing opulence. The estates bequeathed to the church during the eighth century, and in the language of the age, “for the redemption of the soul,” or as “the price of transgression,”²² became so considerable, as to place the higher class of churchmen among the most wealthy tenants of the crown. Their particular jurisdiction, and the relation in which they stood to the court, was so far secular, as to facilitate the introduction of the same bonds of fealty in the case of spiritual as of temporal lords; and to monarchs, that sort of compact appeared to be of moment, both to their own safety, and that of their kingdoms. The customs of knight-service, which diffused a connective influence over every department of society, were unknown in the east; but in the west they were thus extended from the property of the feudal chieftain to that of the ecclesiastical dignitary. The entire authority of a baronial court was accordingly added to that of a bishop; and in numerous states the shepherds of the church became in consequence distinguished by every title which bespoke jurisdiction in a civil aristocracy; subject to the same demands

²¹ It is true that few councils were convened without censuring this species of simony; but the reiteration of the law demonstrates the inveteracy

of the abuse.

²² Muratorii, *Antiquitates Italiæ mediæ ævi*, tom. v. p. 712.

from the sovereign, not merely of money, but of men and horses, they were not unfrequently seen at the head of their military vassals, resigning the mitre and the crosier for a season, in favour of the helmet and the sword.²³

There were, however, some plausible circumstances, which operated to produce this civic importance of churchmen. In the majority of instances they were the only men qualified to commit the decisions of an assembly to writing, or to transact affairs depending in any measure upon documents. It appears, also, notwithstanding numerous exceptions, that on most questions, ecclesiastics as a body were less to be dreaded by sovereigns than any other portion of society as it then existed. Their friendship was truly valuable, not only from the extent of their possessions, but still more from the influence of their spiritual censures; while that separated state which was induced by their law of celibacy, and that change of masters to which all ecclesiastical property was continually subject, seemed to render it less hazardous thus to favour their aggrandizement, than to confer additional power on the families of noblemen. But it should also have been remembered, that the ignorance of the laity was the reproach of the clergy, and that such of their order as might appear to respect the canons which prohibited their appeal to arms, were often capable of stimulating the most ferocious of men to avenge their quarrels. The very circumstance, too, of their separation from the feelings which arise out of family relations, and from the thought of transmitting present possessions to a remote posterity, sometimes imparted an independence to their conduct, which rendered them the most formidable of all opponents; especially when their struggles were associated with a conviction, that the papal court would afford both

S E C T.
II.

Motives of
this arrange-
ment.

²³ Moshcim, ii. 223, 225.

CHAP. a sanctuary, and a recompence, to such as became suf-
 I. ferers in the cause of the church.

Celibacy of
 the clergy.

But while these multiplied avenues of wealth, and this official splendour, were diffusing a most unhappy influence over the clergy, it became important to the preservation of the system, that some redeeming customs should be incorporated with it, and especially such as should confer the semblance, at least, of a peculiar sanctity on the clerical character. For this purpose, something extraordinary, as denoting an unusual spirit of self-denial, would be regarded as necessary. Many ages indeed intervened, before the spirit which had distinguished the ancient pastors of the church, became of such rare occurrence as to seem almost extinct. But as the influence of a scriptural piety declined it was deemed expedient to supply its deficiencies by a species of ceremonial sanctity; and thus the clerical office became the associate of peculiarities, designed to extort that homage from superstition in favour of the worthless, which the devotion of ancient believers had freely rendered to the personal merit of their rulers. Before the age of Tertullian, the distinction between the clergy and the laity was established; the latter term being limited to the people; the former, denoting the chosen or the sanctified.²⁴ It was not, however, until after the civil establishment of christianity, that the privileged order became distinguished by any peculiar costume.²⁵ Previous to that important event, much had been done to facilitate the introduction of a law among

²⁴ Gibbon, ii. 335.

²⁵ When Justin Martyr and Origen became christian teachers, the academic cloak which they had obtained as philosophers was still worn by them. The singularity of the circumstance is noticed by Ensebius, (iv. 11, vi. 19,) and it may have contributed to introduce the particular habits afterwards

adopted by the clergy. The custom, however, was not adopted so suddenly as might have been anticipated from the rapid progress of similar changes. To the close of the sixth, and even of the seventh centuries, councils employed their authority to prevent clergymen from habiting themselves like seculars. Dupin, cent. vi. 153, vii. 27.

churchmen, which has since formed the ground of pretensions to an almost unearthly purity; and which by rendering the prosperity of their order their chief solicitude, has contributed much to the increase both of its opulence and power. The continuous effort which was every where demanded to establish the law of clerical celibacy, bespeaks the unnatural severity of that article of discipline, and shews that effects of the highest importance were expected to result from its being rigidly enforced. Untaught in the sacred scriptures, and as certainly unknown in the earlier ages of the church, the custom has derived the whole of its authority from the obtrusive policy of innovators.²⁶ What St. Paul delivered merely as *advice*, councils in their greater wisdom have converted into *law*; insisting also on the *general* obligation of a practice, plainly intended but for *particular* adoption. The applause so profusely conferred upon virginity in the third century, appears to have suggested this novel measure. By the eastern church it was cautiously discountenanced, and several centuries were required to impose it on the clergy of the west; nor is it probable that it would at length have been submitted to, had not an increase of superstition throughout the population of Europe contributed to augment its doubtful reputation.²⁷ Among the facts, indeed, which compose the

²⁶ Gratian published his collection of the ecclesiastical canons at Bologna in 1151, and through several centuries they were almost the sole guide of the church. His statement is, that the marriage of priests though not forbidden either by the law of Moses, or that of the gospel, is nevertheless condemned by the constitution of the hierarchy; nor is he alone among catholics in avowing this opinion. His words are these, "Copula sacerdotalis nec legalis, nec apostolica autoritate prohibetur, ecclesiastica tamen lege

penitus interdicatur." Caus. 26, quest. 2. c. 1.

²⁷ Origen is among the early commentators who interpreted Paul's injunction respecting a bishop's being the husband of one wife, as a prohibition of second marriage to the clergy.—Hom. xvii. in Luc. Tertullian, though a married man, is known as a still more extravagant admirer of celibacy. It is believed, also, and by writers opposed to the practice, that like Cyprian in a later period, he retained his wife in connexion with his priesthood. The

CHAP. I. early history of the western nations, it is particularly observable, that the populace became loud in their praise of an avowed abstinence from animal indulgencies, in exact proportion as they had themselves become enslaved by them. Hence the supposed continence of the ministers of religion, atoned for their deficiencies in many of the positive virtues; and was admitted as the evidence of that self-government which could result but from extraordinary sanctity. By the separation, also, which was thus effected between that order and the many ties of family, and those feelings of patriotism which such relations were designed to create, the most serious evils were often produced. The church was ever before them, not only as a matter distinct from the state, but as one to them of much greater moment; and such was the structure of the canon law, of which this regulation became a prominent part, that every conscientious priest was placed under the most powerful inducement to prefer the will of his spiritual superiors to that of the community, or of his sovereign. If, however, the rude and scattered portions of the people were taught to venerate these claims to an ethereal elevation of character, the more intelligent classes of men, inhabitants of cities and resident in courts, were not slow to observe the forbidden avenues which nature had formed, from being thus impeded in her course. The retaining of a concubine in the place of a wife, is described as an expedient

zeal of Tertullian in praising clerical celibacy, was largely imbibed by Jerome, the most efficient patron of monachism. But in the council of Nice, an attempt to impose this state on the bishops and clergy was spurned as a novelty.—Socrates, *Hist.* i. c. 2. Sozomen, *Hist.* i. c. 23. Dupin, cent. v. Council of Nice; and Collier, i. 195. The last writer states, that the sixth general council, which was two centuries later, permitted marriage to priests

and deacons if solemnized before ordination, though in immediate prospect of it. But within the diocese of Milan, the purity of St. Ambrose degraded every clerk twice married. Dupin, cent. iv. 207. The frailties of many who aspired to the honours of virginity in the days of St. Hilary and St. Basil, rendered those fathers more wary in admitting candidates for the state which they had been accustomed so warmly to eulogize.—*Ibid.*

not wholly unknown to the clergy of the third century; though it should be stated, that the zeal for celibacy, which thus displayed itself, was severely censured by the more devout of their brethren.²⁸ It may be admitted, also, that individuals both among clerks and laymen have doubtless maintained their supposed separation from the sex; but the history of the papal hierarchy, has rendered it equally certain that a prohibition of that state to *any*, which inspiration has declared to be honourable in *all*, must often prove the parent of intercourse, guilty in itself, and most injurious to society. Many unquestionable facts have served to disclose the corruption of ecclesiastics in this particular; while the ballads and tales of the same periods, whether true or false, reveal the popular sentiment—and that sentiment they show to have been most unfavourable to the morals of these bold pretenders. Through nearly a thousand years was celibacy resisted; first, by the majority of the clergy, and afterwards by many considerable bodies among them; and to the close of that period, the multiplied regulations of their councils

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II.

²⁸ Mosheim, i. 269.—Cyprian, Jerome, Gregory, Nazianzen, and Chrysostom, were among the fathers who were most forward in censuring the practice of clerks in retaining prostitutes in the place of that unclerical appendage to their establishments—a wife.—Collier, 195. After a while the prohibition of second marriage was extended from the clergy to their widows.—Fleury, iv. 272, 273.—In a council at Toledo, convened in the last year of the fourth century, it was decreed that men ought not to communicate with the widow of a bishop, priest, or deacon, who had married a second time, Dupin, cent. iv. 286. That the clergy of Spain in the beginning of the fourth century were allowed to marry, is farther evident from the fifteenth

canon of the council of Eliberis, which enacts, that “if a clerk shall know that his wife commits adultery and sends her not away, he will be deemed unworthy of the communion of the church even at the point of death.” These facts, and those of the preceding note, are chosen from a multitude that might be produced to show the slow and unequal steps by which the law of clerical celibacy was established. Nothing deservng the name of uniformity had obtained respecting it until the power of the papacy was consummated. It is also worthy of remark as betraying the usual inconsistency of error, that the men who have degraded marriage to a *vice*, have also raised it to the place of a *sacrament*.

CHAP. were insufficient to secure to them the spurious credit
 I. which they sought. Provisions, which they were solemnly pledged to observe, were known to be secretly violated; the relation which the Redeemer had sanctioned as pure, being discarded in favour of indulgences, which he had declared should exclude from the kingdom of heaven. Making every just allowance, therefore, for prejudice and individual sincerity; the zeal of the pontiffs in thus rendering that political structure, which they designate the church, the only spouse of the priesthood, must be regarded as frequently including a deliberate sacrifice of the morals of the clergy as men, to their uses as instruments in forwarding the scheme of priestly usurpation.²⁹

Rise of
 Monachism.

Important, however, as this article was in the policy of the Roman church, it may be doubted whether the costs of its establishment would have been incurred, had not the reputation of the practice to which it relates been previously won by numbers of the laity. The votaries of the monastic life, whose exploits form so prominent a part of ecclesiastical history, were originally laymen, and though celibacy was with them, for a while, as with the clergy, a practice rather commended than enforced, it soon came to be considered as indispensable to a state of entire self-devotion. The monastic discipline also, and the celibacy of the clergy, rose into importance amid the increasing corruption of the christian profession, and as the effect of the same causes. In the language of its authors, it was

²⁹ "It might be expected," observes an intelligent writer, "that the popes who imposed the law of celibacy on their clergy would themselves set an example of strict obedience to it. Nothing less. They did not indeed marry, but concubinage supplied the place of marriage. We hear their children spoken of as such by all historians, with as little reserve as the

legitimate children of avowed marriage. It was the ambition of most of them to aggrandize their *sous*, and the policy of a papal reign was often wholly employed to procure for them, by wars or intrigues, establishments and principalities."—Sturge's Reflections on Popery, 107. The author cites Machiavel's History of Florence, lib. i. p. 24. See also Mosheim, ii. 501.

formed principally from the severer maxims of primitive believers, and was designed to preserve to a backsliding community, the benefit of examples truly christian. Anthony, an illiterate youth of Thebais in Egypt, may be said to afford the earliest example of this species of seclusion.³⁰ On entering a church, the first words of the preacher which met his ear, were “sell all thou hast and give it to the poor.” His disordered imagination so interpreted the incident, that his property and connections were instantly relinquished; and, reduced to poverty, he became successively the occupant of a cell, a sepulchre, and a ruined castle. Beneath the shelter of the last, the solitary consumed nearly twenty years of life; and before his decease in the monastery of Colzin, he appears surrounded by five thousand men, the companions of his vows, and deeming nearness to his person the highest honour to be obtained on earth.³¹ Structures rose, almost without limit, in Egypt and Palestine, for the reception of his followers; while in Rome many were found to applaud his zeal, and copy his example.³²

S E C T.
II.

A. D. 305.

His death so far increased the ardour of his proselytes, that before the close of the fourth century, his mode of seeking the celestial kingdom was adopted with eagerness, wherever the forms of christianity were admitted. In Egypt, his spiritual progeny amounted to a hundred thousand persons: in various nations the institute became in the same degree popular.³³ Two centuries intervened between the labours of Anthony, and those of the cele-

³⁰ Egypt, it is true, had its solitaries previous to this period: but it devolved on Anthony to form them into organized communities, and to add greatly to their number. Cassian, lib. ii. c. 5.

³¹ Fleury has given the sum of Cas-sian's prolix account of early mona-chism in the eighth and ninth books of

his history.—See particularly page 482—484, 507. and Dupin, cent. iv. 53, 54.

³² Before the close of the fourth century, the zeal of St. Basil imparted form and stability to the institute in Greece, and in Italy it received an earlier patronage from St. Athanasius.

³³ Fleury, ii. lib. 20.

CHAP. I. brated Benedict. The latter saint, after some years of eccentric seclusion, and voluntary suffering, became the founder of an order which was rapidly diffused over the western world. The previous corruption of the monastic societies facilitated the progress of the Benedictine discipline, but the rule which supplanted nearly every other, betrayed in its turn the symptoms of decay.³⁴ Unity is ever hazarded as numbers are increased; and the progress of monachism, arising rather from perverted feeling, than from superior discernment, was inseparable from a growing diversity of taste and opinion. The renunciation of property and of marriage, and a vow of unlimited obedience to the rule of the fraternity, were conditions exacted of every candidate; but a detail of peculiarities was left to be determined by the prudence, the caprice, or the ambition of individuals and societies.

The Cenobites, a very numerous sect, had been taught to venerate their community of goods, and the severity of their discipline, from its alleged conformity to the example of such among the first christians as held their possessions in common. They retained so much of social feeling as to live in companies, and a sufficient portion of reason to afford an untutored mind the relief of manual occupation. To beguile the brief intervals of devotion, a few might aspire to the employment of transcribing portions of the scriptures, or certain works of piety; but their labours were generally directed to the manufacture of paper, cloth, mats, or baskets, or to the cultivation of the garden and morass. In the view, however, of certain feverish spirits, these regulations wore the appearance of a compromising lenity; and hence the rise of the *hermit*, and the *anchoret*. By the former, the solitude of his cell was preferred even to the limited intercourse of a convent; by the latter, the hollow of the rock was coveted as an

³⁴ Dupin, cent. vi. 51. Fleury, ii. 99—100.

abode, and the domain of the wild beast as his support. To both, the approach of mortals was as that of certain infection.³⁵ To these sects, also, which in Egypt alone, included, as we have seen, more than ten myriads of votaries, the Sairabites must be added; a race described by historians, as no less numerous, and distinguished from the former but as having neither home nor law, and as strolling from place to place as the prospect of securing a low subsistence was presented.³⁶ Against these sturdy vagrants many an invective was directed by the more regular monks. The rule of St. Benedict reproves their conduct, but at the same time passes by the more rigid modes of seclusion, proposing nothing beyond the revival or improvement of the Cenobite institute.³⁷ It is proper here to remark, that if this patriarch of monachism possessed any tincture of learning, he affected to despise it. By his rule the hours of the natural day were nearly all allotted to the returns of sleep, to acts of devotion, or to manual toil. A small remnant among his numberless disciples have become distinguished as scholars; and as such are often adduced to demonstrate the utility of the monastic life; but for this honour they have been more indebted to their own genius than to that of their patron.³⁸

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II.

A. D. 500.

³⁵ Monserrat, Corboda, and some other places in Spain, have yet to boast of a remnant of these misanthropic visionaries. Their sanctity is believed to be pre-eminent, and to this gratification of vanity they are allowed to add a life of indolence.

³⁶ Fleury, *ubi supra*.

³⁷ I have said nothing of nunneries, as their history is scarcely distinguishable from that of male seclusion. The number of females inhabiting the cloisters of Spain in 1787, were 32,000. In 1805, the nunneries of Seville alone, were twenty-nine; and a few years since the same town included forty

communities of friars with their respective convents. In the ages preceding the reformation this costly delusion pervaded every nation in proportion to its wealth.

³⁸ The rule of the Cenobites is ascribed to Pachomius, and was believed to have been dictated by an angel. It prescribed twelve psalms to be sung at each service, and a portion of the scriptures to be read. After each psalm was a prayer, during which the monks extended their hands, fell upon their face, rose again to avoid sleep, imitating all the movements of the person presiding, Cassian, c. vii. The

CHAP. I. The progress of these institutions has been variously explained. It is certain, that the ascetic spirit and the austerities which mark its history, belong, with some modifications to every age and people. It is now operating with eastern devotees, as anciently among the Therapeutæ of Judea, the Pythagoreans of Egypt, and the Platonists of Greece; and the history of the monastic profession has shewn, that no change of climate is sufficient wholly to eradicate the propensity. In times of persecution, the desert had afforded an asylum to men the most sincere in their devotions; and in the judgment of others, their equals in integrity, the advantages of solitude were not diminished by the changes which speedily followed the protection of the gospel by the throne. But to reprove the licentiousness which then became so largely connected with a profession of christianity, not a few even of the lawful enjoyments of life were placed under a most rigorous proscription, and the probable sincerity of some was, no doubt, seized as the garb of hypocrisy by others. It is manifest also, that the reputation of sanctity which became inseparable from these vows of seclusion, appealed with too frequent success to the mere vanity of the mind;³⁹

Causes
which fa-
voured its
diffusion.

whole study of the ancient monks is said to have been morality, and the fact is mentioned by the historian as to their honour.—Fleury's Discourse on the First Six Centuries. When the profession of monachism became preparatory to priestly ordination, something more of learning might have been expected to be incorporated with it. But Dr. Milner, the catholic historian of Winchester, has given a curious description of the services usually performed by the western monks, from which it appears, that if faithful to their rule, the followers of St. Benedict must have been as devoid of learning as their master. Of each twenty-four hours nearly half were to be invariably

assigned to devotion; and from the rule of Benedict, as given by Fleury, it appears, that at least seven of the remaining hours were required to be spent in labour. The reader will judge how large a portion of time may be redeemed from the fraction thus left for the pursuits of literature. The venerable Bede might well speak of composing his voluminous works amid "the innumerable restraints of monastic service."—History of Winchester, i. p. 100. Fleury, iv. 94.

³⁹ The famous St. Arsenius, when pressed to assign a reason for his rigid seclusion, is made to answer, "When a maid is in her father's house many seek after her, when she is married

that beneath the shade of the cloister, the pusillanimous often sought a shelter from the perils of a military life;⁴⁰ and that there the plebeian frequently experienced a most desirable improvement in his temporal condition.⁴¹ The mind embittered by disappointment, might there seek the indulgence of its spleen, or the solace of its griefs;⁴² and such as had made the largest sacrifice of wealth or honour, might there be soothed into a deliberate approval of their choice by a flattering increase of popularity and power.⁴³ It is, however, to the policy of the bishop of Rome that the permanent influence of monachism, must be mainly attributed. The profession, though made by laymen only, soon came to be considered as preparatory to holy orders. Pope Siricius called various of its members to ecclesi-
astical offices; and from that period, the cowl of the monk was often assumed as the precursor of a mitre—the cell of the recluse losing the whole of its gloom, as it became a spot where the schemes of a secular aggrandisement might be successfully laid.⁴⁴ Such, indeed, was the

A. D. 400.

less account is made of her." In the judgment of this devotee, to avoid as much as possible the intercourse of men, was the surest road to be highly esteemed by them.—Cassian in Fleury, book xx.

⁴⁰ Gregory the Great complained bitterly of the laws which prohibited the cloister to such as had been designed for the army.—Dupin, cent. vi. 82. Fleury, iv. 321.

⁴¹ See Fleury, ii. 867, where an ingenuous monk confesses that his earthly lot had become "much better," as the consequence of relinquishing his peasant's life for the monastery. From this class of persons the monasteries of Spain are principally supplied.

⁴² The opulent and the powerful, have generally deferred the period of their retreat until the means of earthly pleasure were fast sliding from their

grasp. But the famous St. Dunstan is not the only man of his order whose ascetic passion has been the result of disappointment in an opposite course.—In Turner's Hist. l. iv. c. v.

⁴³ See the story of the Matron Paula, Gibbon, ii. 224. From the incautious zeal of Jerome, she received the impious title of "Mother-in-law of God." In the middle ages, many were devoted to the convent from their cradle. See an instance in Mosheim, ii. 384; and one still more characteristic of the times in Bede, Hist. iii. 24.

⁴⁴ Of the force of this motive we may judge from the fact, that at the commencement of the fourteenth century, there had been of the benedictines alone, 24 popes, 200 cardinals, 7000 archbishops, 15,000 bishops, about the same number of abbots, and more than 4000 saints.

CHAP. I. importance known to be attached to the institute by the popes, that monasteries frequently appealed to them to become exempt from the jurisdiction of their respective diocesans, and to be placed in immediate subjection to the see of St. Peter: and this flagrant disorder, was so far encouraged, as to provoke the loud rebuke of many among the more virtuous of the clergy.

Its corrup-
tions.

These causes were too obviously connected with the progress of monachism to have been wholly unobserved; and most of them when attended to must have proved very unfriendly to the extravagant claims of its votaries. The most partial acquaintance with the sacred writings must have been sufficient to shew, that the spirit and the flesh are there viewed as alike the seat of evil propensities; and it must have been frequently evident, that these propensities were likely to be irritated rather than subdued by an effort to conform to the life of a recluse. The sacred writers speak, indeed, and in powerful language, of the advantages of retirement; but the same teachers, and while addressing the same persons, are found adverting with equal frequency and warmth to the importance of the numerous duties which arise from the social relations.⁴⁵ Nor could the instructions of that volume be known as breathing a spirit of philanthropy opposed to this act of separation from human intercourse, without exposing the practice to reproof or suspicion. A low servility, and a heartless selfishness of temper, formed the character

⁴⁵ Vigilantius, a priest of Barcelona, opposed many of the errors of his time, especially the extravagances of the monastic life, venturing to describe the practice as at variance with the obvious designs of our present being. But though certain prelates favoured his opinions, the loose and noisy declamation of Jerome passed for an answer to his objections.—Fleury, iii. 92. From Augustine's book, "On the

Business of a Monk," it appears that the vagrant habits of multitudes in his day, who had assumed that name, were such as to render them a reproach and a burden to the nations. Much the same thing is implied in the subsequent care of Gregory the Great, to restrain the fugitive and vagrant monks."—Dupin, cent. v. 183. Fleury, book xxxvi.

moulded by the monastic habit in most of its professors, and in the loathing of the wise and generous they frequently had their reward.⁴⁶ The vices commonly resulting from the law of celibacy, were not always to be screened from the eye of the laity; nor could the demand of the monk, to be esteemed as enduring the privations of a voluntary poverty, be preferred without sometimes awakening a degree of contempt, so long as he was known to be one of a community princely in its wealth. The secret relaxation of discipline may have escaped a frequent detection; but to make professions of peculiar abstraction from the world, while the conduct bespoke the surrender of the heart to luxurious indulgence; and to boast of vows with respect to abstinence, while the person betrayed the habits of the epicure, was to disclose an amount of hypocrisy which the lash of the satirist was ere long employed to correct.⁴⁷ The pontiffs also, who had so greatly favoured the establishment of these fraternities, were to contribute much to deprive them of their fame. While the papal encroachments were in their infancy, every bishop extended the most cautious jurisdiction over the monasteries founded within the limits of his diocese; and the prelates were in general solicitous to free these sanctified communities from the most distant interference of the civil magistrate. But in this undue exercise of their power, a precedent was furnished which, as in similar cases, proved most injurious to the influence by which it was supplied. The societies which were taken from the cognizance of the magistrate by the bishops, were next withdrawn from the cognizance of the bishops by the pope;

⁴⁶ Council of Paris in 1212, Dupin. St. Dominic protested on his death-bed, and in the presence of his brethren, that he had preserved his virginity to that hour. Such chastity in a

monk, observes Sismonde, was reckoned a thing hitherto unheard of, and almost miraculous.—Crusades against the Albigensis. c. v.

⁴⁷ Fleury, Hist. vi. 232.

CHAP. I. and the distance of Rome being thus placed between the convent and the residence of its only superior, the increase of monastic corruption became proportioned to the new prospect of impunity.⁴⁸ The religious, as they are designated, had been long directed by circumstances to the path of improvement, as affording the only hope of preserving the influence they had gained, when the celebrated William of Wykeham examined their pretensions. The result with that shrewd judge of human nature was, that he found them all too easily seduced to be worthy of trust; and he, in consequence, resolved on becoming the dispenser of his own bounty, as the friend of the poor, and the patron of learning.⁴⁹ This forfeiture of public confidence was notorious; hence the decline of the conventual schools, and the rapid progress of the national seminaries.

Rise of the
mendicants.

Before the close of the twelfth century, so many disorders had conspired to shake the credit of the hierarchy, that not a few of its members began to regard its predicted dissolution as a probable event. Among the numerous sects which made their appearance about that period, denouncing the corruptions of the church, individuals may be found objecting principally to its secular government—and that because the feature most opposed to their own earthly speculations and designs. But the greater number, and from more generous motives, were equally opposed to its creed, its morals, and its ritual. A contempt of present things, and zeal in the work of religious instruction, were esteemed by those dissenting

⁴⁸ Gregory the Great, while strongly disposed to favour this independence of the monasteries, appears somewhat apprehensive that the custom might, in some instances, be productive of evil, (Fleury, p. xxxvi.) a suspicion which proved to be but too well founded.

St. Bernard, though a monk and zealous in the cause of the papacy, was vehement in his complaints against this dangerous innovation.—*De Considerat.* lib. iii. c. 4. See also, Council of Trent, lib. ii.

⁴⁹ Lowth's *Life of Wykeham*, 91.

communities, as among the more conspicuous virtues of the first christians; and in their pastors these were in consequence regarded as indispensable. Nor is it to be doubted, that a life of the severest morals and of surprising activity, was often effectively opposed by their teachers to the indolence or the vice of the recognized clergy. To check the progress of this defection was the avowed purpose of the crusade conducted under the papal sanction, and with such unsparing cruelty, against the Albigensian sectaries. These movements accompanied the establishment of a tribunal, designed to perfect the extirpation of heresy, and since but too well known under the name of the Inquisition. But suspicion is inseparable from usurped authority, and some further security was still coveted by the papal court.

Under the sanction of the haughty Innocent the Third, St. Dominic, patriarch of the holy office, and by his presence, his predictions, and his prayers, abettor of the massacres of Languedoc, became the founder of an order of men, distinguished by the name of friars, and designed to unite in themselves the lost reputation of the monk, the priest, and the master in science. The first was secured by their vow of celibacy, by the austerity of their manners, and by their strict renunciation of property, both as individuals and as a community. The second was obtained by uniting the work of priestly absolution with the labours of an itinerant ministry: the last was the result of their attention to the scholastic philosophy, and of their public lectures in the universities. The stormy scenes in which they made their appearance, were better suited to the impassioned nature of St. Dominic, than to the milder spirit of St. Francis, his contemporary. In history, however, the followers of the latter are scarcely distinguishable from those of the former, except as more frequently weakened by internal division. The Carmelites

A. D. 1200—
1250

CHAP. I. and Augustinians were also mendicants, but were less considerable in numbers and influence.

By these new orders, every province of Christendom was viewed as a part of the field assigned to their special ministry. In performing their itinerant services, the authority of the secular courts and the claims of the parochial clergy were but little regarded; while the sovereignty of the pontiff, as their only superior on earth, was most religiously extolled. Their claims to learning and genius were thought to be sufficiently demonstrated by appealing to the names of Aquinas, Occam, or Duns Scotus; and the poverty of their garb and their patience of fatigue in discharging the duties of their pedestrian vocation, were considered as affording equal evidence of their surpassing sanctity, and of their superior initiation into the mysteries of religion. To the suspicious secrecy of the convent, these fraternities opposed a life of the greatest publicity; and, as a security against the corruption which wealth had diffused through every other department of the ecclesiastical system, they appealed to the alms of the instructed as forming their only revenue. But these hopeful peculiarities, which rendered them for awhile the check of reformation, gradually disappeared. As the zeal usually distinguishing a new sect began to decline, means were especially devised for accumulating riches; and while avarice, and the indulgence of such vices as usually spring from it, diminished their influence with the more observing of the people, their ambition, and the intrigues to which it led in connexion with the universities, exposed them to the frequent censures of the learned.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Dupin, cent. xiii. c. 9, 10. Mosheim, cent. xiii. part ii. c. 2. In Italy, as well as in some parts of Spain, the remains of this order are still sufficient to burden the community, and to expose every thing there called religion

to reproach. "The institution of mendicant orders," observes an enlightened catholic, "we cannot but reprobate, as we do not see why those who can work should play; nor can we discover either utility or decency in sending

But the discipline of the mendicants, though strictly adapted to the exigencies of the period, and subservient for awhile to the cause of papacy, was no novelty in the history of superstition. The model of their peculiar manners had been familiar many centuries since, to the citizens of pagan Rome; and the practices of begging priests was felt among heathens, as among christians, to be both a religious and a political grievance.⁵¹ The abuses of this custom, as fostering superstition and impoverishing families, suggested to Cicero the importance of limiting the right of gathering alms of the people to one order of priests, and of restricting that order to certain days in the exercise of their privilege. Nor was it in this particular only, that the policy so manifest in the systems of ancient idolatry, was laid under the most free contribution to support the usurpations of the papal power. In the progress of the hierarchy, we have seen that appeals were frequently made to the arrangements of the Levitical economy as imparting the highest sanction to its claims. But we have also seen, that its establishment under Constantine arose not so much from the pleading of so doubtful a precedent, as from those divisions of power, which had obtained in the polity of the empire previous to its adopting the christian profession. Nor was it deemed sufficient that the *government* of the church should be so completely assimilated to the forms of a worldly magis-

SECT.
II.

Pagan cus-
toms incor-
porated
with the
christian
ritual.

out, at certain stated periods, a few holy vagrants upon a marauding expedition, to prowl around the country, and to forage for the convent. We consider a poverty so practised, that is, at the expense of the poor, as in fact oppressive to the poor, and as such we wish to see it proscribed as a vice, and not recommended as a virtue."—Eustace's Tour, iii. 397.

⁵¹ Stipes æreas immo vero et argenteas, multis certatim offerentibus sinu

recepere patulo; nec non et vini cadum et lactis et caseos avidis animis corradentes et in sacculos huic questui de industria preparatos farcientes, &c.—Apuleius, Metam. I. viii. p. 262. Stipem sustulimus, nisi eam quam ad paucos dies propriam Idææ Matris excepimus: implet enim superstitione animos exhaurit domos.—Cic. de Legib. lib. ii. 9. 16. See Middleton's Letter from Rome, p. 81.

CHAP. I. tracy, its *worship* became changed, to a still greater extent, by admixtures from the rituals invented by pagan priests.

The introduction of incense, of holy water, and of lights at noon day, into religious assemblies, may be described as innovations truly harmless. But if these were customs which believers had from the beginning religiously discarded, as having long formed the acknowledged symbols of idolatrous sentiment, the innocence of connecting them with the christian ritual is more than doubtful.⁵² It was not at this point, either, that the stream of corruption once introduced could be stayed. The next step was to render certain altars, which these consecrated lights were appointed to illuminate, the receptacle of votive offerings. Among heathens the temptations arising from this custom had occasioned no small scandal; and the way was thus prepared for introducing the entire craft of pagan temples into the christian sanctuary. Consistently with such beginnings, the sanctity first attached to places was soon extended to persons, and passed imperceptibly from the living to the dead. To aid the memory or imagination of the worshippers, when praying to departed saints, pictures and images were, ere long, deemed indispensable; and to complete the return of the former state of things under different names, these visible objects of popular adoration became famous through the states of Christendom for the multitude of their miraculous deeds. From the altar of the bishop and of the parochial presbyter, this superstition

⁵² "In truth," observes Vigilantius, "we see a pagan rite introduced into our churches, under the pretence of piety, when numbers of wax caudles are lighted up in clear sunshine, and people are every where seen kissing and decorating I know not what contemptible dust, preserved in a little vessel and wrapped in precious linen. These men do great honour truly to the

blessed martyrs, by lighting up candles to those who are illuminated by the majesty of the Lamb in the midst of the throne."—Heiron. adv. Vigil. 282—284. St. Jerome admits the pagan origin of the practice, but defends it by observing, "Illud fiebat idolis, et ideo detestandum est; hoc sit martyribus, est ideo recipiendum est." 284.

extended itself to every locality; imparting to the hill and the valley, the wood and the stream, some angelic resident, or some guardian saint, to whose honour some visible representative was consecrated, and in whose name the traveller, or the neighbouring population offered their devotions. Lands in which the gospel was professed, were thus covered with the signs of an idolatry less cruel, perhaps, but scarcely less prolific or absurd than that which the Hebrews were commissioned to destroy from off the soil of the Canaanite.⁵³ A severe observer of Italian manners has remarked, that on entering the towns and cities of that people, the same features of superstition are presented. "We find every where the same marks of idolatry, and the same reason to make us fancy that we are still treading pagan ground; whilst at every corner we see images and altars with lamps or candles burning before them, exactly answering to the description of the ancient writers, and to what Tertullian reproaches the heathens with, that their streets, their markets, their baths, were not without an idol. But above all, in the pomp and solemnity of their holidays, and especially their religious processions, we see the genuine remains of heathenism, and proof enough to convince us, that this is still the same Rome which old Numa first tamed and civilized; who, as Plato says, by the institution of supplications and processions to the gods, which inspire reverence, while they give pleasure to the spectators, and by pretended miracles and divine apparitions, reduced the fierce spirit of his subjects under the power of superstition."⁵⁴

⁵³ Deut. xii. 23. "Ye shall utterly destroy the places wherein the nations served their gods, upon the high mountains and upon the hills, and under every green tree; and ye shall overthrow their altars, break their pillars, burn their groves, and hew down the graven images of their gods." So little

has this part of Mosaic instruction been attended to, that in catholic countries to this day, almost every village has its titular deity, and which, like its heathen prototype, has the power of working miracles though itself of the rudest workmanship.

⁵⁴ Middleton's Letter. 54, 55. Ma-

CHAP.
I.

This departure, both from the precepts and genius of the gospel in modes of worship, is not only admitted, but gravely vindicated by some of the most learned advocates of the papacy. By one of these apologists, the wisest popes and authorities are described as having learnt in their endeavours to convert the gentile nations, that their prejudices and their habits, though bearing the appearance of profanity, were to be in some measure tolerated, lest nothing should be accomplished from the common error of attempting too much; and that the obligation of the divine law was, therefore, for a while suspended until their converts should be recovered to a more informed state of mind by the teachings of the Holy Spirit, and should be thus prepared to render a more complete submission to the authority of the Saviour.⁵⁵ But the plans of reformation which have been thus bequeathed to be completed by others, have too often become stationary. The protestant churches have evinced but feeble signs of improvement since the death of their founders; in some instances their movements have been evidently retrograde. The religious customs also, of modern Italy, afford sufficient proof that since the period referred to by the author last cited, no serious effort has been made to exclude, by a more scriptural exhibition of the christian religion, the extensive heathenism which was then so speciously connected with it.⁵⁶

Imitative
character of
the papal
policy.

In the applause, therefore, which has been lavished on the political discernment exhibited in the multifarious arrangements of the papal delusion, it has not been always sufficiently remembered, that much as the system was destined to effect, its authors have seldom risen above the

homet conformed in this respect to the policy of his rivals, and the heathenism which he so freely incorporated with his system from the surrounding nations is still a part of it.—Gibbon, ix. 247—249. 263. 273. Mr. Gibbon contrasts the change which has passed on

the profession of the gospel, with the sameness of Islamism, but this is merely describing the corruptions of the latter as *innate*, while those of the former are *extraneous*, 351.

⁵⁵ Aring. Rom. Subter. i. c. i. 21.

⁵⁶ Turner's Hist. v. 73. 103—107.

very humble merit of imitators. It had been the policy of ancient Rome to reconcile the deities of conquered nations to her own; and, as far as possible, to identify the one with the other. This practice favoured the stability of her triumphs, and its obvious uses may have suggested to her ecclesiastical rulers of a later period, the importance of adopting it, so far as it might subserve the cause of that peculiar ascendancy which they sought. It is certain, that of the religious ceremonies which the states brought into a spiritual alliance with the papacy had previously honoured, as many were frequently retained as could be in any way associated with the name of christianity. And it will be remembered, that the paganism of gentile nations was not a scheme of recent origin. On the contrary, it was the result of experiments in the art of subjecting the many to the few which had been extended through a series of ages; and having acquired a fearful maturity as the consequence of successful application, it had been long and justly regarded as the most important engine of political rule. Hence, when the reign of the pagan priesthood was passing away, it became more easy for the clergy to enter into their labours than to attempt the elevation of their nominal converts to the better standard of the gospel; and with multitudes the allurements thus presented to ambition, cupidity, or the love of ease, was altogether irresistible. Accordingly, if many deities were expelled the popular pantheon, their place was readily supplied by another race of subordinate divinities, to whom, in precisely the same locality, the same homage might be rendered. By such steps the patriarchal simplicity of New Testament worship was wholly discarded; and a host of ceremonies was introduced from the rituals of almost every nation under heaven.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ On this whole subject the reader may consult, in addition to Middleton's valuable Letter, Blount's Vestiges of

Ancient Manners in Italy; an elegant and dispassionate production.

CHAP. I. Among the innovations thus effected, the use of images proved to be the point requiring the most determined effort to establish. The evasions employed to rescue the custom of bowing down to an "image of the dead,"⁵⁸ from the charge of idolatry, were not such as at once to remove the scruples of the more reflecting; nor in consequence to give a sudden prevalence to this branch of conformity with heathenism. But, if the discernment of the enlightened, and the feelings of the devout, were sometimes shocked by the progress of this novelty, it is certain that both knowledge and piety are found in their most feeble state among the multitude, who, after the fourth century, were induced to assume the christian name. In the east, these symbols of erroneous faith, the most gross which the ancient superstition could supply, were more vigorously resisted; and even in the west, they were variously opposed, until the darkness of the middle ages, and the power of the pontiffs, which advanced together, raised them to the station which they have since occupied in the worship of the Romanist.⁵⁹

Prayer for
the dead.

Religious services relating to the dead, were derived from the same source, and made their appearance at the same period. But though founded on errors of the most dangerous tendency, the progress of the custom was uninterrupted, and almost unopposed. This fact, however, is not difficult to explain. The practice of making appeals to Heaven with respect to the souls of the deceased, was not associated in its earlier stages with a notion of their state as one of suffering; and it was long before any definite opinion was generally admitted, as to their guilt, or as to the time, the place, or the extent of their necessities.⁶⁰ From the manner, indeed, in which this custom

⁵⁸ Such is Jerome's definition of an *idol*.—*Com.* in *Isa.* c. xxvii.

⁵⁹ See the controversy respecting image worship, in *Mosheim*, ii. 259—

267, 332—338, and in *Gibbon*, ix. c. 49.

⁶⁰ Thus *Mahusbury* inserts a letter from Charlemagne to Offa, in which the

is generally adverted to by catholic writers, it would seem as if invariably connected with the comparatively modern doctrine of purgatory. But there is no truth in history more certain, than that most of the ancient believers, who are thus made to be the partisans of that delusive tenet, were far from embracing it; though their opinions respecting an intermediate state, too soon betrayed the injurious impression, which had been made by the philosophy of the gentiles on the faith of the gospel. The doctrine, however, being once admitted, which declared the penal inflictions endured by departed spirits to be capable of mitigation or removal through the mediatory services performed on their behalf within the walls of the convent or the church, every feeling of nature and religion, both in the dying and the bereft, became too frequently prostrate at the pleasure of the priesthood. Possessed of such means, the amassing of wealth, and the raising of costly edifices, was an amusement rather than a labour.

But among the doctrines of the papacy which bespeak the mental bondage of its ancient votaries, a pre-eminence must be given to its interpretation of the eucharist; and it must be admitted, that in this particular, the claims of churchmen, during the middle ages, to originality are not to be disputed. In the view of the protestant, the insult offered to the whole province of reason, and of the senses, by the doctrine of transubstantiation, surpasses immeasurably every similar device in the annals of paganism. But this tenet, though unknown to the ancient superstitions, was conducive in a high degree to that authority of the clergy, which too soon became the end to be promoted by every innovation whether of faith or polity. Hence,

Transubstantiation.

writer requests prayers to be offered for the soul of "our apostolic lord Adrian," observing at the same time, that this is done, not as doubting the

repose of his spirit, but as a token of respect to so illustrious a personage. Hist. de Reg. ubi supra.

CHAP. when the period affording the prospect of its reception
 I. arrived, the most vigorous efforts were made in its favour. To assist the pretensions of error, by connecting it with the plea of antiquity, has been the common expedient of its advocates, and one the policy of which is manifest in the history of this mysterious article—and indeed in that of every abuse which the papal system has included. It will be confessed, that language of the most emphatic character is employed by the writers of the New Testament respecting the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the ordinance of the supper, and we are thus prepared to encounter similar modes of expression, in the devotional compositions of subsequent believers. But while these are culled by the disputant, with an evident feeling of triumph, as inculcating the doctrine of a real presence, it is certain that language might be readily extracted from the pages of the most cautious opponents of that tenet, in the same degree liable to this unnatural construction.⁶¹ It was reserved to the discernment of the ninth century, to attempt a description of the *manner* in which the Saviour is present in the christian passover. The *fact* of that presence was every where acknowledged; but the *mode*

⁶¹ “I will show,” says Archbishop Tillotson, “by plain testimony of the fathers in several ages for above five hundred years after Christ, that this doctrine was not the belief of the ancient christian church. I deny not but that the fathers do, and that with great reason, very much magnify the wonderful mystery and efficacy of this sacrament, and frequently speak of a great supernatural change made by the divine benediction. They say, indeed, that the elements of bread and wine do by the divine blessing become to us the body and blood of Christ; but they likewise say, that the names of the things signified are given to the signs;

that the bread and wine do still remain in their proper nature and substance; and that they are turned into the substance of our bodies; that the body of Christ in the sacrament is not his natural body but the figure of it, not that body which was crucified, nor that blood which was shed upon the cross; and that it is impious to understand *the eating of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drinking his blood* literally; all which are directly opposed to the doctrine of transubstantiation, and utterly inconsistent with it.” The testimonies adduced are from Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Origin, Cyprian, and Augustine. Works ii. 103–109.

or nature of it was still undefined. In the year 845, the monk Pascasius Radbert created a discussion on this subject; and to him belongs the honour or reproach, of first announcing to the churches of Christendom, “that after the consecration of the bread and wine in the Lord’s supper, nothing remained of these symbols but the outward figure, under which the body and blood of Christ were really and locally present; and the body of Christ thus present in the eucharist, was the same body that was born of the virgin, that suffered upon the cross, and was raised from the dead.”⁶² The doctrine which this marvellous statement was supposed to express, is that which every christian was ere long required to believe, but which the wisest polemic has not yet learned to understand, nor in consequence to explain. It is not surprising therefore, that the reveries of this recluse should be found contradictory; and from the nature of the subject, a similar confusion was almost inseparable from the various productions which the controversy elicited. An exception, indeed, is to be made in favour of the celebrated Johannes Scotus, who in compliance with the instructions of Charles the bald drew up his scriptural exposition of the sacrament, declaring plainly, “that the bread and wine were the signs and symbols of the absent body and blood of Christ.” “All the other theologists of his time,” observes Mosheim, “fluctuate and waver in their opinions; expressing themselves with ambiguity, and embrace and reject the same tenets at different times, as if they had no fixed or permanent principles concerning the matter in question. From all this, however, it evidently appears,

SECT.
II.

⁶² “Both reason and folly were hitherto left free on this matter, nor had any imperious mode of faith suspended the exercise of the one, or restrained the extravagance of the other.” Such is the statement of Mosheim, and

the point is one of those which can hardly be supported by a better authority.—Cent. ix. part ii. c. 3. The same, indeed, is conceded by Bellarmine, *De Script. Eccles.* p. 188.

CHAP. I. that there was not as yet in the Latin church any fixed or universally received opinion, concerning the manner in which the body and blood of Christ are present in the eucharist."⁶³

But while this mystic article was not to be pressed into the most subtle combinations of language, and was under every view of it opposed to the use of the senses, and to the voice of reason and of scripture, much had been done to favour its admission. The word transubstantiation was left to make its appearance during the latter half of the twelfth century; but the causes which had so changed the polity of the christian church had conferred upon the clergy the name of priests, and to give meaning to this title, and completeness to the scheme from which it arose, it was next required that every clergyman should have some true and proper sacrifice to offer. The slaughter of animal victims on the altar of christian worshippers was not for various reasons to be attempted—especially while a doctrine was at hand, which converted each celebration of the eucharist into a renewed offering of the sacrifice of Christ. The christian priest was thus raised to the dignity of presenting that one ineffable atonement, which every animal sacrifice had merely prefigured; and of presenting this in a way of miraculous operation, more inconceivable than the most stupendous deeds by which the faith once delivered to the saints had been attested of old.

Effect of these innovations in reference to the papacy.

So numerous, and of such importance, were the changes which had been in various degrees admitted by the professed disciples of the gospel, long before the Roman prelates had made very serious advances toward their destined supremacy. Scarcely a feature remained of the discipline established in the primitive church; and of its doctrine, very little was known beyond what was with difficulty extracted from the mystic import which superstition had

⁶³ Cent. ix. *passim*.

conferred upon the sacraments. Nor is it easy to discover a pretension urged by the papacy, when its ascendancy was acquired, the embryo of which may not be perceived, in some of the ecclesiastical customs which had long since obtained. It is not to be supposed that spiritual censures were always, either correctly defined, or wisely administered, while principally controlled by the voice of the people. The wrongs, however, inflicted by the laity on themselves, appear to have been few and partial, compared with those which followed the surrender of their power in such matters to be employed at the sole discretion of their rulers. And it is no less obvious that this transfer of authority was not without its disadvantages to the majority, at least, even in that favoured class of persons. The weapons which it thus became the peculiar province of the clergy to employ, with respect to the members of their immediate charge, were soon found by the inferior orders among them, to be equally at the command of their superiors in office in relation to themselves; while the submission claimed by the metropolitan and his suffragans, within the limits of a diocese, or of a nation, too often supplied to the pontiff and his conclave, a model of that unlimited dominion to which they have so ardently aspired. By such steps the *principles* of the papal usurpation were rendered familiar to nearly every state of Christendom, before the papacy itself had become a formidable power. The plea of infallibility, whether advanced more covertly by the solitary priest, or more openly in the local or general assemblies of the clergy, included the germ and essence of the predicted apostacy. The same policy too which had limited the benefits of religion in the experience of the worshipper, to the official services of the priest, had rendered the subordinate clergy equally dependant for their special gifts on the peculiar functions of the more dignified members of the hierarchy; while these again

CHAP. were linked to each other by similar ties, in lengthened
 I. gradations, forming a chain of interest and subjection, which was not to be dissolved, except by a diffusion of that infidelity which it was so fitted to create, or of that scriptural knowledge which its strongest efforts were made to destroy.

Connexion
 between the
 power of a
 vicious cler-
 gy, and the
 virtues of
 their prede-
 cessors.

Yet, it may be affirmed, paradoxical as the assertion will appear, that the entire fabric of clerical dominion arose more from the virtues of the men by whom the sacred offices were for some ages sustained, than from all other causes. Despotic power, so ancient in the east, would hardly have been tolerated through so many centuries, and amid so much disaster, had not its forms been sanctified in the earlier annals of the world by the paternal virtues with which it was then connected. And it is in every view probable, that the undue pretensions of the christian priesthood would have been urged in vain had there not been a period when such influence was felt as a certain benefit. The race of good men would not become suddenly extinct, and they would perhaps long regard the authority conceded to their order, either as justly pertaining to it, or as what could not be deposited elsewhere, under existing circumstances, with the same religious and political security. The application of power entrusted to such hands, would be just; but the instances, and they were numerous, in which interests the most important to communities were thus preserved, must be reviewed with a mixed feeling, when it is remembered, that such occurrences contributed so much to place a multitude in possession of distinctions thus nobly earned, only that they might be as basely misapplied!

SECTION III.

EARLY ADVANCES OF THE PAPACY.—ITS VARIOUS PROGRESS TO THE CLOSE OF THE SIXTH CENTURY.—RISE OF GREGORY THE GREAT.—HIS CHARACTER.—INFLUENCE OF HIS PONTIFICATE ON THE MAXIMS OF THE PAPAL POWER.—AMBITION OF THE PONTIFFS, AND THEIR APPELLANT JURISDICTION.—ORIGIN OF THEIR TEMPORAL POWER.—PAPAL INFALLIBILITY.—THE DECRETAL EPISTLES.—THE SCHEME OF HILDEBRAND.—DISPUTE RESPECTING INVESTITURES.—ITS CONCLUSION.

THAT St. Peter possessed a sort of precedence among the apostles, and that a certain pre-eminence should be in consequence assigned to the bishop of Rome, in the order of prelacy, is a doctrine which appears to have been partially adopted by the clergy of the third century. Cyprian is known as the advocate of these new and dangerous opinions. It is plain, however, both from his conduct, and from his writings, that they were ever accompanied by such cautious explanations as served to reduce the favoured apostle to the rank of his brethren, “in power and authority;” and by thus rendering the precedence intended merely titular, the bishop of Carthage protected his favourite maxim respecting the strict equality of the episcopal order.¹ He was himself privileged to call the

SECT.
III.

Early advances of the papacy.

¹ In the words addressed to Peter, he views a “power and honour” as conferred peculiarly on that apostle. But it was such as should be his for a season only. The same authority is supposed to have been subsequently bestowed on his brethren, especially by the words addressed to them in com-

mon after the resurrection. The bishop appears pleased with this theory, as preserving the unity of episcopacy, flowing from one source, while if it left any precedence to the Roman prelate, it was merely that of name or courtesy.—Dupin, cent. iii. 137.

CHAP. I. councils of his brethren, but with this exception, his influence never rose in virtue of his office above that of moderator in an ecclesiastical assembly; and his own power in the African church appears to be the extent of that conceded by its clergy to the bishop of Rome, in relation to the christian commonwealth.² For it was the lot of Cyprian, and of the African bishops, to differ in judgment from the prelate of the capital; and their conduct at that crisis, disclosed their unanimous purpose to maintain the most watchful independence of foreign control.³ Of the popes at this period it has been justly remarked, that “the bishops of Italy, and of the provinces, were disposed to allow them a primacy of order and association (such was their very accurate expression) in the christian aristocracy. But the power of the monarch was rejected with abhorrence, and the aspiring genius of Rome experienced from the nations of Asia and Africa a more vigorous resistance to her spiritual, than she had formerly done to her temporal dominion.”⁴ Even in the western provinces, the peculiar authority of these

² Indeed, after the establishment of christianity, the convening of a general council was certainly the province of the emperors, the jurisdiction of the patriarchs being jealously limited by the boundaries of their respective patriarchates. (Gibbon, iii. 301.) If Mosheim be correct, therefore, in conceding the power, which I have stated in the text, as that of the Roman prelates in the third century, it is evident that the establishment of christianity was an event which for a while abridged rather than extended their influence.

³ Mosheim, i. 264. His authorities are the epistles of Cyprian, and his *Unitate Ecclesiæ*. Clemens, mentioned by St. Paul, (Phil. iv. 3.) is named by Eusebius as the third bishop of Rome; and an epistle written by him to the church at Corinth, is described by the

same historian as “excellent” and “admirable,” and as received by the “general consent” of the christian church. It is, however, unfortunate for the claims of the papacy, that nothing can be conceived more directly opposed to the notions of precedence of any sort in the bishop of Rome, than is this admirable, authentic, and, we may add, extended document. In it the name of Clemens is associated with that of the humblest members of the community, and its truly primitive title is “the church of God which is at Rome, to the church of God which is at Corinth;” nor does the language of expostulation or entreaty yield for a moment to that of authority.—Eusebius Hist. iii. c. 15, 16. Fleury, i. 122, 127. Wake’s Epist.

⁴ Gibbon, ii. 333.

dignitaries was so trivial through several centuries from the age of the apostles, as to occasion a visible perplexity among the more candid of catholic historians when attempting to define it.⁵

SECT.
III.

It is the confession of Eneas Sylvius, cardinal of Sienna, and afterwards pope, that "before the council of Nice, every one lived according to his own ways, and that men in general evinced but a very small regard for the church of Rome."⁶ The council named by Sylvius was convened in 325; but even that assembly failed to recognize any peculiar dignity in the bishops of Rome. Its canons restricted the affairs of every province to the decision of its metropolitan; and in noticing the patriarchal power, as conferred on the prelates of Rome and Alexandria, their particular authority is described as local, as derived from ancient custom, and the one as being strictly the same with the other. One of the laws enacted in that convention, relates exclusively to the limits of the power entrusted to the higher dignitaries of the church; but there is not the remotest sanction to be wrung from it in favour of the doctrine which has bestowed a special supremacy on the Roman see.⁷ That in the subordination of churches throughout the empire, the arrangement of the civil provinces formed the model of the ecclesiastical, is a fact altogether unquestionable. Were it otherwise, the act of the Nicene fathers, which conferred so flattering

Its various progress to the close of the sixth century.

⁵ Near the end of the second century, Victor, bishop of Rome, refused to commune with the oriental christians, on account of their nonconformity with the Roman customs in the celebration of Easter; and this childish petulance has been represented in the heat of party zeal as an authoritative excommunication of the parties. His conduct, however, excited the pity both of opponents and friends; nor do the

facts in the laborious compilations of Fleury and Dupin prove any authoritative precedence as conceded to the bishops of Rome, even in the west, before the close of the fourth century.

⁶ Epist. lib. i. p. 288.

⁷ That such is its surprising deficiency has often been acknowledged, and with evident regret. Fleury and Dupin, ubi supra.

CHAP. a distinction on the bishop of Alexandria, while aware
 I. that his claim to a religious pre-eminence arose solely from
 the civic importance of his residence, would seem to point
 out the principal, if not the only source, of the same
 dignity as confirmed to the bishop of Rome.⁸

Twenty years had intervened since the council of Nice, when Hosius, bishop of Cordova, and the friend of Julius who then filled the Roman see, procured the sanction of the council of Sardica to certain regulations, which promised an enlargement of jurisdiction to the western patriarch. By this assembly, it was agreed that if an accused bishop should be dissatisfied with the judgment pronounced by his metropolitan and his brethren, his appeal was not to be made, as in previous instances, to the bishops of a neighbouring province, but his complaint was to be submitted by his judges to the bishop of Rome, who should either confirm the sentence already passed, or appoint a re-judgment of the case by the prelates of the nearest district. It was also secured, that the bishop of the capital should be present, in the person of his deputies, at every such investigation, should he deem it expedient. This council was convened by the emperors Constantine and Constantius, and on the subject of the Arian controversy. Certain conditions preferred by the eastern representatives were rejected, and they withdrew; but there still remained a hundred bishops from the churches of the west, and these are described as yielding their unanimous assent to the above enactments. By the general church, indeed, they were never acknowledged; but it is obvious, that their adoption in so considerable an assembly afforded no small encouragement to the pontiffs in their struggles to establish their appellat jurisdiction—a poli-

⁸ The church of Jerusalem alone derived her honours from spiritual considerations, but those, sacred as they

were, could raise her but to the fifth place in dignity, Fleury and Dupin, *ubi supra*.

tical engine, which has proved the chief source of their opulence and power.⁹

SECT.
III.

But the decrees of the council of Sardica failed to produce tranquillity even in that division of the church where its authority was admitted; and if the substance of the power conferred by that assembly on Julius and his successors, was granted not many years later by the law of Valentinian the third, it was to prevent the frequent disputes of the clergy from passing under the notice of the secular judge. The weakness and credulity of that prince, were thus employed by an ecclesiastic who then filled the see of Rome, and boasted of his friendship. It should be distinctly noticed also, as a circumstance aiding these encroachments of the pontiffs, that in addition to the civic supremacy of the papal residence, which suggested so many ecclesiastical arrangements favourable to ambitious designs, the bishop of Rome was the only prelate in the west possessing the patriarchal power. In the east, the same elevation was shared between several; but the supposed successor of the prince of the apostles, might boast of being the only organ of general communication between the two great divisions of the christian world.¹⁰ Nor was this the only circumstance of the same kind tending to the same result. According to the constitution of the church, as modelled by Constantine, every

⁹ Fleury records it as the statement of Athanasius, that the decrees of Sardica received on the whole three hundred episcopal signatures, (ii. 169.) The opponents of these canons, "especially of that concerning appeals," treated the council as an assembly of Arians, and so doubtful was its authority, that its laws rarely succeeded except when palmed on the church as decisions of the council of Nice, (ibid, 172, Dupin, cent. iv.) The eastern prelates were so indignant on learning

the conduct of the Sardican assembly, in relation both to doctrines and discipline, that, immediately on their return, they joined, to the number of eighty, in pronouncing a sentence of excommunication on the pontiff himself, on Hosius his friend, and many others.

¹⁰ Thus Gregory the second writes to the emperor Leo, "Are you ignorant that the popes are the bond of union, the mediators of peace between the east and west?"—Gibbon, ix. 138.

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I.

civil vicariate had its ecclesiastical exarch, or primate. The vicariate of Rome comprehended the south of Italy, and the three chief Mediterranean islands. It was comparatively small, but its ten provinces were wholly free from metropolitan jurisdiction, a peculiarity which vested the bishop of Rome with the important functions of that dignity, in addition to the higher authority possessed by him in common with his eastern rivals. And it is of some moment, to a just perception of the steps by which the papal power became so far ascendant, to observe that this union of the metropolitan and patriarchal authorities formed the kind of empire which the pontiffs laboured to extend over other provinces; and that while thus employed, the practice of their own patriarchate was often appealed to as an authoritative precedent. Hence, their endless interference with the provincial system of government, as in the ordination of bishops, the convening of councils, and the encouragement of appeals. The first successful encroachment of this description was made in the fourth century, when the province of Illyricum consented to receive its bishops in dependance on the suffrage of the Roman patriarch. It is not, however, until nearly two centuries later, that we discover any farther evidence of such advancement. At that period, we find the archbishops of Milan confirmed in their election by the popes; and the pontiffs are subsequently much employed in reviewing the decisions of provincial synods; still pleading however in support of this assumption, the decrees of Sardica and the law of Valentinian.¹¹

In the lapse of ages, also, the jurisdiction, or the wealth attached to the particular churches, came to be viewed as

¹¹ The extent of the Roman patriarchate, as intimated by the local phraseology of some ancient canons, has been the subject of much learned

and passionate discussion.— See Bingham, book ix. c. i. sect. 9, and Hallam, ii. 226, 227.

those of the saints to whose special memory the buildings had been dedicated; and hence the zeal of churchmen, which too often arose from ambition or avarice, was easily disguised under the modest plea of defending the prerogatives, or promoting the credit of their several patrons. Thus the deference to the see of Rome, which was claimed from the western clergy by Hosius, in the council of 347, was mildly solicited as an act of homage to St. Peter. The pontiffs were not insensible to the power of this artifice; and hence, when Innocent, who filled the papal chair in the beginning of the fifth century, would convince the less submissive of the clergy of his claims, he bids them remember that the Roman church had received many important traditions from her founder, St. Peter; and that, to the customs of Rome, the churches were indebted for the only complete model of the christian worship.¹² To this period, however, this novel plea was so partially admitted, that Zozimus, who succeeded Innocent, and shared in his ambition, deemed himself more secure in appealing to the old foundations of authority. Still within half a century from its first promulgation, this doctrine was published with unblushing confidence by an Italian synod. The members of such assemblies had long considered the dignity of their country as involved in that of their patriarch; and, in the present instance, it was gravely recorded, “that it is not to any councils, or to the decrees of any, that the holy Roman catholic and apostolic church owes her primacy, but to the words of our Saviour in the gospel; ‘Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my church,’ thereby building the church upon him, as upon a rock, which nothing can shake; and that the Roman

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¹² Fleury, iii. 192. It is during this century that St. Prosper, a known flatterer of the popes, thus discloses his anticipation of their approaching monarchy:—

Sedes Roma petri; quæ pastoralis
honoris,
Facta caput mundo, quicquid non
possidet armis,
Religione tenet.

CHAP. church, without spot or wrinkle, was consecrated and ex-
 I. ————
 alted above all other churches by the presence, as well as
 by the death, martyrdom, and glorious triumph of the two
 chief apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul.”¹³ It is true, that
 on this novel ground of preference, the bishop of Jerusa-
 lem possessed a stronger claim to pre-eminence than his
 brother of Rome; nor could the guilt of the former city,
 in slaying the master, have been seriously named without
 inducing a recollection of that incurred by the latter,
 which had been equally infuriated in the slaughter of his
 servants. Notwithstanding, from this period, the words
 “Thou art Peter, and I give to thee the keys of the
 kingdom of heaven,” were in constant requisition among
 the partisans of Rome; “and what is often repeated,
 how weak soever, never fails to make some impression,
 especially on the illiterate. The hard stone is at length
 hollowed by the cave’s drop; however feeble and imper-
 ceivable the effect of a single drop must be accounted.”¹⁴
 Previous to the formal announcement of this tenet, a
 clerical assembly of the same country had petitioned the
 emperor Gratian to reserve the judging of a bishop of
 Rome to his immediate authority, or to that of an ecclesias-
 tical council.¹⁵ But in the sixth century, the bishops,
 even of Italy, were in some degree alarmed by the bold-
 ness of the delinquent pontiff Symmachus, who, appealing
 to the *jus divinum* of his sovereignty, asserted his exemp-

¹³ Bower’s Lives. In the middle of the seventh century, the pontiff Stephen assumed both the name and power of St. Peter, and in a letter, which has been called the third epistle of that apostle, the Galilean fisherman assures the king, the nobles, and the clergy of France, that the highest rewards will be found to await them if they come forward to the help of his church against the rapacious Lombards, and that the Virgin, the Angels, and the

whole assembly of saints and martyrs, join with him, from their place of repose, in this his suit to the powers of the earth. Should they allow his tomb and his temple to be despoiled by perfidious invaders, evil must befall them to the uttermost.—Codex. Carolinus. Ep. iii. 92.

¹⁴ Campbell’s Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, ii. p. 95.

¹⁵ Ibid, 97.

tion from the authority of councils and of kings, declaring himself to be amenable to God alone.¹⁶ It was, however, impossible that the friends of the rising power should have been otherwise than alive to the importance of the new foundation on which its claims had been placed. Rome must soon cease to be the queen of cities, and even the decrees of monarchs, or of councils, might be rescinded. In prospect of such events, a doctrine, which exhibited St. Peter as the superior of his brethren, and his supremacy as an inheritance divinely awarded to the bishops of Rome, was one affording the promise of empire, which was scarcely to be limited; while it seemed to exclude the ordinary influence of those political changes by which the strength of all other power has been so certainly, and so speedily demolished. Hence, when the pontiffs declare themselves less concerned to preserve existence, than to maintain what they describe as the prerogatives of St. Peter, the sincerity of their language is not always to be questioned.

With this claim to superiority, another, and one much less objectionable, was sometimes associated. Innocent, while advancing the first, in the hope of extorting a reluctant homage in favour of his see, calls also upon Italy, Gaul, Spain, Africa, Sicily, and the adjacent isles to recollect, that they owe the very name of christianity to St. Peter, or to men whom his successors had dignified with the episcopacy. Hence, he complains of the negligence, which it appears was general, with respect to the peculiar usages of the parent church. In many instances, the fact of such obligation was not to be disputed. At the same time, the sober statements of antiquity have not shewn them to be so extended as to warrant the rhetorical language of various later writers on this subject. The claim, however, would sometimes be felt and acknowledged;

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¹⁶ Mosheim, ii. 114, 115.—Fleury, ii. 689—693.—Bower's Lives, Symmachus.

CHAP. and, in such cases, the right to a sort of general superin-
 I. tendance would be urged with confidence. But the metropolitans were tenacious of their power; and it remained for Gregory the Great to render the ecclesiastical authority of Rome truly formidable, beyond the limits of Italy; and partly from mistake, and sometimes from design, to contribute more than any other man toward its future ascendancy.

Rise of
 Gregory the
 Great.

Gregory was called to the papal chair under the reign of Maurice, and in the year 590.¹⁷ It was an elevation which had been recently occupied by one of his ancestors, in the person of Felix the second. Gregory's immediate parents were of distinguished rank, and revered as devout. On the decease of his father, he resigned the office of prefect of the city in favour of the cloister; and expressing a wish to be forgotten among men, employed his ample patrimony in founding seven monasteries, six in Sicily, and the seventh at Rome, fixing his own residence in the latter. But there were elements in the character of Gregory strongly opposed to the inaction of the convent. From the hand of Pelagius the second he early received the office of deacon; and by that pontiff was induced to become a resident in the Byzantine court, as nuncio of the apostolic see. On the death of Tiberius, and after four years absence, he returned to Rome, filled the office of seretary to Pelagius, and, on the decease of his patron, was unanimously chosen to sustain the papal dignity. After much hesitation, the sincerity of which has been variously judged, the honour was accepted; and the pontificate of Gregory the Great became one of the most eventful periods in the history of the church.

His cha-
 racter.

The character of this extraordinary man was in no few

¹⁷ The facts adduced in the text to illustrate the character and pontificate of Gregory, are selected from the

profuse details of Fleury and Dupin, except when cited as from his epistles.

respects particularly suited to his station and his times. If from being deficient in learning himself, he fell into the common error of undervaluing it in others, his was not an age to appreciate any of the refinements of literature.¹⁸ Rome was then reduced by the united influence of war, pestilence, and famine, to the lowest stage of her depression; and there was an adaptation in that ruder eloquence with which the pontiff often applied the comforts of religion to the sorrows and the disordered passions of its citizens. The removal also of the imperial residence to Byzantium, had elevated the bishop of Rome from the rank of a second to that of the first man in the more ancient city; while, from the necessity of the times, Gregory the Great became the frequent correspondent of princes on the subject of war and peace, and was allowed the exercise of a princely influence. At the same time his episcopal revenues were collected with a paternal mildness; and from the rigid economy of his establishment a large surplus arose, which was freely distributed to relieve the general distress. The maxims of his own conduct, and those commended by him to the clergy, discover no ordinary acquaintance with the human heart; and to his honour the indolent and vicious of that order dreaded his inspection. Nor is there room to charge him with substituting the morals of Epictetus in the place of the doctrines of Christ, since the truths peculiar to the gospel are exhibited, either in his own or in borrowed language, in most of his writings. It may likewise be worthy of

¹⁸ Mr. Gibbon has censured the taste of the pontiff in discouraging a priest from teaching the classics, because it required the same lips to utter the praise of Jupiter and of Christ. Mr. Eustace defends the conduct of the saint by referring to that of a modern prelate, who relinquished his favourite study of chemistry when called to the

bench, because an employment of too little importance to be associated with obligations so serious. Unfortunately, however, in another of his epistles, Gregory has described such occupation as inconsistent with a proper feeling of piety, either in priest or layman, lib. ix. ep. 48. cited by Dupin.

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I,

remark, that to the indefatigable labours of Gregory, the papal ritual is indebted for much of its subsequent order and efficiency. But the mission of St. Augustine and his monks to impart the knowledge of christianity to our Saxon ancestors, rose also from his zeal, and forms the worthiest deed of his pontificate. There was much in the circumstances of the ancient capital during Gregory's elevation, to facilitate the introduction of that temporal sovereignty which ere long became inseparable from the papacy; and while his character must have imparted no small impetus to this tendency of events, it was equally adapted to give a plausible aspect to his numerous acts of spiritual encroachment. How far this influence of his virtues may have diminished their real claims, in the case of some protestant and sceptical historians, it is not easy to determine; but it is certain, that few men have been exposed to the same indiscriminate application of censure and applause. His monastic vows may appear of doubtful sincerity, because accompanied by such a display of the most popular virtues of the age, as formed the best security against descending unnoticed to the grave. The language of humility also, which passed with such readiness from his pen, was the associate of actions which often betrayed much less of that feeling than of its opposite; and while his general conduct and advice are distinguished by their prudence, he is found on some occasions almost surpassing the age in which he lived, in the weaknesses of superstition and credulity.¹⁹ His zeal in the cause of what were deemed the prerogatives of his see, or, in his language, those of St. Peter, was avowed distinctly as

¹⁹ His Pastoral, which our Alfred honoured by translating, appears to be the work most creditable to Gregory's feelings and discernment. It is, however, like most works of the period, little more than a compilation. The reader who is sceptical of this pontiff's

credulity and superstition, need only consult his Dialogues, or his Life of St. Benediet. Highly, indeed, must he have valued the filings from St. Peter's chain, since nearly twenty of his letters refer to his various distributions of them!

exceeding every other solicitude. Nor did he need to be instructed in the policy of dividing the power opposed to his pretensions. Hence, this influence was employed with success to check the aspiring temper of his rival, the patriarch of the eastern capital; and to subdue the independence of provinces in Greece, Spain, and Gaul. Even the mission to Anglo Saxon Britain, is chiefly remarkable through several ages as subservient to the growing usurpation, inasmuch as the plea which it supplied for interference with the discipline of the English church, became a formidable precedent in similar struggles for dominion. To the death of Gregory, indeed, the ordination of bishops by the pope was limited to that of such as were called to the churches then immediately depending on the see of Rome, and therefore named *suburbicary*; as was the exercise of various among the papal functions. But at the close of this period, the vicars or legates of the western patriarch were firmly established in several nations, as in Illyricum, Spain, Gaul, and Portugal; and the granting of the pallium, a recent custom, became more frequent, and connected with doctrines more hostile to the independence of the national churches.²⁰ It is true, the authority of the pontiffs was described even by Gregory, as receiving its limits from the canons and customs of the church; but he must have known that these afforded no sanction to a Roman bishop, in conferring the pallium on a prelate of Antioch, nor in meddling with the disputes of ecclesiastics in Constantinople or in Chalcedon. His admiration of relics, and his faith in miracles, may be regretted as the weakness of the age, or as a politic device unworthy of his station; and even his obvious love of power, may be somewhat tolerated while his ascendancy

²⁰ These vicars, as their name imports, were the representatives of the pontiff, and either decided the ques-

tions relating in any way to the papal jurisdiction, or referred them to the judgment of the holy see.

CHAP. I. is employed to benefit mankind; but when toward the close of life both gratitude and sincerity are too plainly sacrificed, with a view to preserve his official influence, a strong suspicion is of necessity thrown over much of his previous history.

The emperor Maurice had confirmed the election of Gregory, had granted him many proofs of friendship, and was a prince less unworthy of episcopal confidence than many who were then raised to the imperial throne. By the pontiff also, his character had been frequently extolled as possessing every moral and religious excellence.²¹ It was probably from indifference to the ground of dispute, that the emperor refused to interfere with the controversy which arose between the prelates of Rome and Constantinople, respecting the title of universal bishop—an appellation which the latter had recently assumed, and which the former had endeavoured to suppress by every art of eloquence and policy. Such, however, was the only circumstance which can fairly be supposed to have altered the judgment of the pontiff, respecting the character of his sovereign—when a military insurrection placed the sceptre of the empire in the hand of Phocas—a centurion, and a wretch who appears to have added the sensualities of the brute to the treacherous and vindictive passions which characterize the fiend. Five of the children borne to Maurice were secured by the usurper; these were slaughtered in succession before the eyes of their parent;²² and his murder was followed by that of his brother, of his only remaining son, and of as many, whether patricians or plebeians, as were suspected of

²¹ Epist. lib. v. ep. 63, vi. ep. 30, viii. ep. 2.

²² "At each stroke which he felt in his heart," observes Mr. Gibbon, "he found strength to rehearse a pious ejaculation, 'Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgments are righteous.'"

Such, also, was his attachment to truth and justice, that "in his last moments, he revealed to the soldiers the pious falsehood of a nurse who presented her own child in the place of a royal infant."—Hist. viii. 210—214.

attachment to his interests. It would be easy to select numerous maxims from the writings of Gregory, placing him before us, deeply shocked by these atrocities, and urging with an apostolic intrepidity, the necessity of repentance, as affording the only prospect of the blessing of heaven on a reign commenced by such deeds. But in his congratulatory letter to the successful rebel, every such topic is passed by, and in the place of that fidelity which he had so often enjoined on others, are his soothing descriptions of misery, as resulting from the weakness, or the turpitude of the former sovereign; and of unusual prosperity as to flow from the piety and benignity of the reigning prince; with much concerning the arm of the Lord, as revealed in favour of his servant Phocas. This declamatory appeal, was borrowed principally from the language of the prophets when describing the advent of Messiah, and the felicities of his reign; and it was consistent with such an application of holy writ, to wish a long and prosperous career to the august personage in possession of the throne.²³ The conduct of this “first pastor of the religion of the emperors,”²⁴ had long been sufficiently at variance with his professions to occasion a frequent doubt of his sincerity; and from the part of it now adverted to, we are obliged to conclude that power had long been the favourite pursuit of this celebrated pontiff—or at least, that at this period, the possession of power had created that idolatry of itself, which is capable in the moment of temptation of bringing every principle and feeling as an oblation to its shrine.

²³ Epist. lib. ii. ep. 36. 43.

²⁴ Eustace. It is perfectly natural that Baronius should attempt to save the reputation of Gregory, by impeaching that of Maurice; but the epistles cited above, are not the only documents opposed to his success. A simi-

lar effort has been more recently made by an historian of our own. But the perplexities which Lingard and Eustace have passed over in despair, will hardly be found to yield to the genius or industry of our well-meaning historian Joseph Milner.

CHAP.

I.

Influence of
his pontifi-
cate on the
maxims of
the papal
power.

We have dwelt the more largely on the character and pontificate of the first Gregory, as the maxims of his conduct included the substance of almost every claim preferred by his successors; while his reputation, which it became in consequence important to preserve, conferred upon them nearly all the authority of inspiration. The doctrine of the pope's legatine authority, his appellat jurisdiction, his dispensing with oaths and contracts, his temporal sovereignty, were all, more or less, assumed by this pontiff. To produce the scheme of Hildebrand, nothing was required beyond the aid of the decretal epistles, and the confirmation of the usages prevailing at the close of the sixth century, by an uninterrupted adoption of them, to the latter half of the eleventh.

It was not immediately, that the consequences resulting from an acknowledgment of the pope's supremacy as derived from St. Peter would be fully perceived, though when generally recognized, it was to impart very plausible appearances to the most iniquitous invasions of human liberty. For the sovereignty assumed on the ground of this theory, was one extending itself to every part of the ecclesiastical system; and being once conceded even in the most modified form, it became consistent that the deputies of the pontiff should have their place, and their influence, in the various national establishments allied to his authority. These ecclesiastics, whether known by the name of vicars or legates, were exempted by their office from all cognizance of their brethren; were taken under the immediate protection of the popes; and secured thus to the interests of a foreign court, they frequently became the mere spies of the land into which they were admitted, and the check of every movement favouring its religious independence.²⁵ Hence, the vigour with which their

²⁵ Matt. Paris, Hist. 637. Boulay, Hist. Acad. Paris, iii. 659.

obtrusive power was sometimes resisted; and hence the unvarying firmness with which their particular services were vindicated and extolled by the pontiffs and their adherents. The rise of this important arrangement in the general usurpation, may be traced to the close of the fourth century; but it remained for Gregory the first, to extend the practice, and to ensure its stability by supplying his successors in office with the most formidable precedents.²⁶ The custom respecting the pallium was of more recent date than the legatine authority; but by the same pontiff that distinction is conferred with greater frequency, and vested with an increased importance. The badge itself, consisted of a trivial ornament worn upon the shoulder, and attached to the episcopal habit, and was granted at first but to some of the more distinguished members of that order.²⁷ After a considerable interval, it was declared to be necessary to the canonical exercise of any episcopal function. It was next demanded, that

²⁶ It was in 379 that east Illyricum was separated by Gratian from the eastern and attached to the western empire, and the event was followed by the appointment of Acholius, bishop of Thessalonica, to the office of papal vicar. Pope Damasius, by whose watchful authority this branch of policy was thus introduced, was succeeded by Siricius, who endeavoured to render the election of bishops through that part of Illyricum dependent on the approbation of the papal representative. The authority conceded to these legates, principally on account of their episcopal rank, was after a while claimed as the legitimate appendage to this superadded dignity. Hence, the disputes in our own history respecting the legatine power, as that which, according to the patriotic party, should be acknowledged but when sustained by the archbishop of Canterbury.

²⁷ The pallium appears to have been

conferred but in two instances before the pontificate of Gregory, once by his immediate predecessor, and once by pope Vigilius. Gregory, however, not only bestowed this badge of spiritual knighthood more frequently, but taught that it should be the mark of superior virtue, and that it should be dependent on his pleasure as to the time, the place, and the manner of wearing it. Dapin, 49. 59. 79. In the tenth century it began to be extended from archbishops to bishops, and the metropolitans of England and Germany visited Rome to receive it. The first practice was censured at the time as an unseemly innovation, and by the Gallic prelates the last was carefully avoided. It was not before the middle of the thirteenth century that attempts were made to compel the elected abbots of the English church to appear before the pontiffs for this purpose.—Matt. Paris, Hist. 951.

C H A P. I. the bishop, to obtain this mark of his complete consecration, should appear in the court of his ecclesiastical sovereign; and to this well known expression of feudatory homage, all the formalities of an oath of fealty to the see of St. Peter were finally added.²⁸

Ambition of
the pontiffs,
and their
appellant
jurisdiction.

It will be sufficient to glance only at these and similar features of the papal policy, to become sensible that with the court of Rome, an increase of political power formed the object to which every question of equity or morals was too frequently subservient. Maxims so pernicious would sometimes carry retribution along with them; but in general the ambition which gave them such importance was accompanied by discernment enough to secure their application, only in such forms, or in such a measure, as the prevailing ignorance or superstition might be expected to admit. Their influence in consequence was greatly conducive to the end proposed. The facts which reveal these purposes of aggrandizement, belong of course to the whole period of the papal history, and to every department of its ultimate jurisdiction. Disputes arose continually in relation, either to the doctrine, or the discipline of the church; and it was no small number of these, which in contempt of every other consideration, were laid under a strict contribution to this increase of dominion. The right of the western patriarch to receive appeals, and to decide on all controversies between ecclesiastical litigants within the ten provinces which composed the Roman patriarchate, had been established from the days of Constantine. But it has appeared, that since the council of Sardica, it became the steady object of papal ambition to

A. D. 345.

²⁸ Our countryman, Boniface, the apostle of Germany, was the first ecclesiastic to yield this last article of feudal homage to the pontiffs. It was not, however, until churchmen had long betrayed their stronger attachment to

the cause of the popes than to the claims of their sovereigns, that the ecclesiastical chieftain deemed the oath of subjection to himself, incompatible with the same pledge to princes.—Mosheim, ii. 542.

extend the same jurisdiction over all the churches of Italy, and through the western empire. Every appeal from distant communities, was in consequence received with a marked interest, as favouring the projected supremacy. Hence, also, to predict the issue of a contest submitted to a papal decision, it is in general sufficient to know the party which had been first to offer that deference to the power of the apostolic see, which was implied in the act of appealing to its authority as final. It is true, the language and the genius of the Latins were less nearly allied to controversy than those of the Greeks; and in the struggle between those great divisions of the church, the former, if less considerable in numbers, generally possessed the advantage of opposing the strength of union to the weakness of division. In the west, however, disputes respecting the polity of the church, were scarcely less frequent than in the east; and its faith was sufficiently the subject of debate, to furnish the popes with a ground for frequent interference. Gregory also, while professing to respect the rights of metropolitans, was not slow to employ the weight of his character in invading them. During his ascendancy, the cases of appellants became numerous, and if his sole authority was not exercised in confirming the sentence pronounced, its revision commonly devolved on a papal deputy joined with the bishops of some neighbouring province. There were exceptions, however, during this period to the latter mode of adjusting controversies; and such as assisted to bring the *revision*, as well as the *confirmation* of synodical decrees, to the immediate tribunal of the popes.²⁹ From the establishment of this custom, and those relating to the pallium, arose a constant intercourse between the dignified churchmen of Christendom and the court of Rome. To the influx of appellants,

SECT.
III.

²⁹ Dupin, cent. vi. 78.

CHAP. and of successful candidates for episcopal and abbatical
 I. honours, were added as a consequence the most accomplished representatives of the European sovereigns, either as defendants of their rights, or as the organs of their pleasure; and when the popes aspired to confer the benefices of the most distant and opulent establishments upon their creatures, the ranks of their attendants were swollen into alarming numbers.

Origin of
 their tem-
 poral power.

From the power of binding and loosing which the pontiffs had derived from the doctrine of St. Peter's sovereignty, arose their custom of dispensing with treaties and oaths. The practice was frequently conducive to their influence, and to that of their clergy; but it also afforded farther proofs of their contempt for moral obligations, when incompatible with the advances of political power. Thus to be applauded as pious and benign, by the man to whom the Saviour had entrusted the keys of the celestial kingdom, must have been, in the judgment of Phocus, the certain assurance of freedom from the guilt of his treason, and of his sanguinary deeds. And it is worthy of careful observation, that by a similar act of perfidity, Pepin of France ascended the throne of his master Childeric the third; and that it was the sanction of that act on the part of Zachary, the contemporary pontiff, and of Stephen his successor, which annexed the exarchate of Ravenna, Pentapolis, and various cities and territories in the Roman dukedom, to the see of the ancient capital. From this period, its bishop, who had often exerted the influence of a sovereign, and sometimes with much advantage to the citizens of Rome, is possessed of the name and of the entire authority of a temporal prince.³⁰ The grant of

A. D. 751—
 768.

³⁰ Mosheim, ii. 229—233. Gibbon, ix. 143—155. The last writer seems to regard the successor of Childeric, and certain of the popes belonging to

the same period, as not altogether unworthy of the civic honour obtained by such questionable means.

Pepin was confirmed and extended by Charlemagne, to whom his sceptre descended. But that monarch, amid his bounties to the ministers of religion, discovered a political sagacity peculiar to himself. As emperor of the west he reserved to his crown the right of confirming every election to the papacy; maintained the strict independence of his civil jurisdiction, extending its authority over the persons of the clergy in all criminal cases, and subjecting the property of churchmen to the tribute demanded of lay proprietors. But his genius was not hereditary. In the ninth century his posterity became involved in destructive wars; and the pontiffs, with their adherents in Italy, profited by this season of weakness so as to escape from their dependance on the imperial confirmation; and, indeed, virtually to secure to themselves the election of the emperor. It is manifest, that a power in the religious establishment sufficient thus to create the chief authority in the secular hierarchy, was inseparable from the most serious encroachments of superstition and of priestly tyranny. The disposal of other crowns would readily follow that of the Cæsar; and the influence which arose from a politic improvement of passing events would soon be regarded as a legitimate function. Nor was it usual with the church of Rome formally to relinquish any claim which it had once asserted.

The teacher, indeed, who would decline the praise of infallibility, may still feel solicitous to conceal, as far as possible, his liableness to mistake when engaged in his own field of instruction. To this very natural anxiety, the papal doctrine of infallibility may be in part ascribed. Long, however, before any pretension to that attribute was distinctly urged, the vanity or the love of power from which it proceeded, had rendered the fearless reiteration, even of the most disputed claims, a prominent feature in the Roman policy; and to the advances of its spiritual

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III.

Papal infal-
libility.

CHAP. I. despotism, this practice, as we have noticed, was of the
 ——— greatest importance. To suspend the exercise of a right,
 was not to abandon the right itself; and though to pre-
 serve this distinction might sometimes require no ordinary
 skill, it is certain, that in general the ceaseless repetition
 of the demand at length secured its admission. By every
 such admission, the general character of the pontifical
 claims as just and sacred was supposed to be preserved.
 That Gregory the first was no stranger to the feeling
 whence this peculiarity derived its origin, and that he was
 fully aware of its influence over every branch of the papal
 jurisdiction, is evident from much of his conduct, but
 especially from the perseverance with which he opposed
 the ambitious title assumed by his rival of Constantinople,
 and from his exercise of the same pertinacity with respect
 to Maxentius, the refractory bishop of Salona.³¹ With
 this rigid adherence to its public decisions, the infallibility
 claimed by the papal court was naturally connected; nor
 was it to be supposed, that popes would have attempted
 to place themselves above councils, without distinctly
 assuming that inspired authority which had been claimed
 by such assemblies. By such steps did men proceed,
 until it was asserted, “that all pontifical decrees ought for
 ever to be observed by all men, like the word of God, to
 be received as if they came from the mouth of St. Peter
 himself, and held like canonical scripture. Neither the
 catholic faith, nor the four evangelists could avail those
 who rejected them, this being a sin which was never to
 be remitted. Christ had bestowed upon the pope, when
 he spake as such, the same infallibility which resided in
 himself.” Yea, what is more, “he could change the
 nature of things, and make injustice justice. Nor was it

³¹ On this point the chief pastor and the chief magistrate of the empire were divided, but after a struggle of eight years continuance the will of the former prevailed.—Dupin, cent. vi. 90.

possible that he should be amenable to any secular power, for he had been called God by Constantine, and God was not to be judged by man; under God the salvation of all the faithful depended on him, and the commentators even gave him the blasphemous appellation of our Lord God the Pope!"³²

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III.

The beginnings of these extravagancies, were in many ways resisted, by such as were acquainted with the ancient constitutions of the church; but their opposition was at length overruled, and by means exhibiting the usual subordination of integrity to power. It was in the eighth and ninth centuries that certain documents appeared, which have since become notorious under the name of the *decretal epistles*. Their chief design was to abridge the influence of metropolitans, as the best means of advancing the papacy. With this view every plaintiff bishop was empowered to make his first appeal to the apostolic see; and the popes descended to avail themselves of the aid to be derived from these artful documents. They were described as including the decrees of preceding pontiffs and of ancient councils, and made their appearance in two compilations. The first extended the extraordinary powers now claimed by the successors of St. Peter, to the time of Siricius; and such was the success of the imposture, that the second conferred on the same pretensions, an antiquity as remote as the days of Sylvester. That these collections were the fabrication of designing men, has been long since conceded by catholics. Their influence, however, on the future usurpations of the papacy is every where seen; and has not only disclosed that contempt of truth and equity, which was so deeply to characterize the later policy of the court of Rome, but that prostrate ignorance both among the clergy and laity, which was so long to form the reproach of the western nations.³³

The decretal
epistles.

A. D. 400.

³² Book of the Church, i. 328, 329.

³³ Lingard's Hist. iii. 209, 300.

CHAP.

I.

The scheme
of Hilde-
brand.

The annals of the papal court through the tenth century, are admitted by its friends to be little else than those of crime—and frequently of crime almost unparalleled. Yet even in that age its influence was progressive, nor were there wanting sycophants to vindicate and applaud the most insulting of its demands. It is not, however, until the century following that this mystery of iniquity appears complete. The filling of St. Peter's chair, which had previously devolved on the clergy and nobility and on the burgesses and the people of Rome, was then confined to the newly instituted college of cardinals.³⁴ At the same time, the utmost ingenuity and ardour were discovered, to render the will of the pontiffs the presiding authority, not only in every church, but in every nation of Christendom. At this period it was not enough to assert their supremacy as legislators in relation to the church, but they claimed, and in virtue of a divine commission to that purpose, the entire distribution of ecclesiastical honours and emoluments, and “carried their insolent pretensions so far, as to give themselves out for the lords of the universe, arbiters of the fate of kingdoms and empires, and supreme rulers over the kings and princes of the earth.”³⁵

Such was the nature of that monarchy to which the haughty genius of Hildebrand aspired; a despotism extended over all ranks, whether priests or laymen, and enforced, by the appalling alternative of immediate submission, or the coming vengeance of eternal fire. His design is stated to have been “to engage in the bonds of fidelity and allegiance to St. Peter, that is, to the Roman

Mosheim, ii. 305—307. See the story of these decretals and of the donation of Constantine, in Gibbon, ix. 161—164.

³⁴ This was achieved by Gregory VII. Soon afterwards it was agreed that the suffrage of two-thirds in the

sacred college should determine the election; and such is the present law of the catholic church.

³⁵ Mosheim, ii. 409. The substance of this claim was ventured before the close of the tenth century.—*Histoire Litteraire de la France*, tom. vi 98.

pontiff, all the kings and princes of the earth, and to establish at Rome an annual assembly of bishops, by whom the contests that might arise between kingdoms and sovereign states were to be decided, the rights and pretensions of princes to be examined, and the fates of nations and empires to be determined.”³⁶ It was a scheme, embodying all the gloomy grandeur of that druidical ascendancy which had anciently obtained in Gaul and Britain; and to its establishment the monk of Clugni directed the activities of his ardent nature, when raised to the papal throne, as Gregory the seventh. But this subjection of all princes to the sovereignty of the pontiff, and of every state convention to a parliament of priests, was to exist only in theory. The clergy of different nations struggled to preserve the authority of their local councils; and princes, in some instances, exerted both their wisdom and their valour to protect their civil dominion from invasion. It is manifest, however, that the independence of the clerical assemblies referred to, had been already greatly subdued; partly by the influence of the decretal epistles, and partly by the customary presence of the pontiff in the person of his legates. The valour of princes also, frequently availed but little, as opposed to the power of men who had every horror of superstition at their command, and who, by those weapons, could diffuse a feebleness and disaffection over the mind of almost any people.

The letters of Hildebrand afford ample proof, that the failure of his scheme is not to be attributed to any deficiency, either of intrepidity or decision, on the part of its author. The most powerful princes were required, and with much solemnity, to subject their respective territories to the jurisdiction of St. Peter, by rendering them the fiefs of the apostolic see. But it was impossible to give

³⁶ Mosheim, ii. 493.

CHAP. I. to this supremacy, as vested in a christian priest, the charm of a remote antiquity. The frame of society to which a similar despotism had once induced, through a large division of pagan Europe, existed but in very faint traces. Hence our admiration of the prowess which could project its introduction, is not without a mixture of pity for the weakness that could anticipate its admission over a field so extended as the nations of Christendom. There were sovereigns, indeed, who, enslaved to an abject superstition, or preferring the feudal superiority of the pontiff to that of some neighbouring power, complied with this demand. It was the authority of Hildebrand which dissolved all the political relations of Poland, dethroned its prince, and placed a creature of the papal court in possession of his dignity. The monarchy of Poland was thus added to that of Russia, to the principalities of Croatia and Dalmatia, and to the several Spanish kingdoms, which became, with every formality, the feudatories of St. Peter's representative.³⁷ In other instances, these insolent demands were sternly and effectively resisted; but it is proper to remark, when adverting to the origin of the doctrine on which they were founded, that the boldness with which it was urged arose principally from the sanction which had been conferred upon it, more or less, immediately, both by the prince and the people through the states of Europe. Thus the crusades to the holy land, in which the popes were allowed to wield the military energies of Christendom, were founded on the supposed right of its religious chief to confer the soil of a distant nation on his particular adherents. These general movements, however, are not so evidently connected with the progress of this pernicious tenet as the local and selfish policy of individual monarchs. Our first William scorned to ac-

³⁷ Mosheim, 492, 521.

knowledge a civil superior even in the lofty Hildebrand;³⁸ but he had previously conceded some such superiority, as belonging to the pontifical chair, by soliciting of its possessor the sanction of his projected enterprize in England.³⁹ The same authority, in the disposal of kingdoms, was more distinctly acknowledged by Henry the second, when he descended to procure the sister island as a grant from Adrian the fourth.⁴⁰ But Henry is also in that class of sovereigns, who lived to feel the impolicy of thus subjecting the temporal to the spiritual sword, for the sake of some immediate and transitory gain.

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III.

Among the disorders which Gregory applied himself to correct, were the prevalence of simony, and the contempt of discipline and morals which had arisen from the celibacy prescribed to the clergy. From his attempt to expel the practice of simony arose his dispute concerning investitures—a discussion which involved the empire and the papal court in long and calamitous warfare. It has appeared, that in the primitive church, the ministers of religion were chosen to the pastoral relation by the people; and it is unquestionable, that after the civil establishment of christianity, this right continued to be divided between the people and the clergy—pertaining, however, after an interval, to the latter in a greater degree than to the former. It will be remembered, also, that in the arrangements of the feudal system established through the western empire, every immediate tenant of the crown received his possessions on condition of appearing in the presence of the sovereign, and of performing there the oath of fealty. As the estates of the church increased, bishops and abbots became an important part of the national aristocracy; and introduced by princes to their particular jurisdictions by the same formalities, monarchs began to consider the

Dispute respecting investitures.

³⁸ Collier's Hist. Records, xii.

⁴⁰ Matt. Paris, 95.—Baronius, 1159.

³⁹ Pict. 106, 107.—Malms. 56.

CHAP. investment of candidates with these honours as their legitimate province. The clergy, however, who had laboured to withdraw the whole business of such elections from the people to themselves, were loud in their complaints; and not unfrequently braved the displeasure of the sovereign by concealing the decease of their bishop or abbot until his successor should be chosen and consecrated. By this stratagem, the designs of the monarch, whether good or evil, were frustrated; and to prevent the recurrence of this artifice, a law was introduced which empowered the magistrate in the neighbourhood of the cathedral, or convent, to secure, on the decease of its dignitary, and in the name of the king, the ring and crosier. These, as the known emblems of the spiritualities belonging to the episcopal and abbatial offices, were conveyed to the court; and the conferring of these on the candidate by his metropolitan, which had hitherto formed the investment, was now to be preceded by a similar formality on the part of the sovereign.

To this innovation it was principally and strongly objected, that it deprived the clergy of their ancient privilege of election, with respect to the more important places of the hierarchy; that the seizure of the ring and crosier by the secular power was nothing less than a deed of sacrilege, and that the uses to which they were applied were to the last degree removed from those holy mysteries of which they were significant. The right of sovereigns to exact an oath of fealty from the clerical aristocracy was not disputed; but while the wealth of churchmen had been derived chiefly from the laity, and while the sword of the laity was expected to defend it from every assault of infidel rapacity, the election of the men by whom the larger revenues of the religious establishment should be enjoyed, was to be scrupulously reserved to the sacred order. Accordingly, in the year 1075, Hildebrand con-

vened a council in the city of Rome; and a sentence of excommunication was pronounced on every ecclesiastic who should accept of investiture from the hands of a layman, and on every layman who should thus presume to touch the ark of the sanctuary. The emperor, Henry the fourth, against whom this anathema was immediately directed, admitted that the practice of regal investitures had become the inlet of a most disgraceful merchandize, but pledged himself to reform the custom throughout his dominions. The pontiff, however, insisted on its total abolition, and a war was thus kindled, which is described by the contemporary writers as that of the empire and the church. Through nearly half a century, the most cultivated provinces of Europe became the scenes of tumult and desolation. One emperor incurred the loss of his sceptre, and his life, by this contest, being first subdued to a state of prostration before his priestly rival, which should have roused the indignation of every monarch. But on the other hand the popes themselves were often reduced to the humbling necessity of providing for their safety by flight and concealment. The struggle attended with this various success was terminated at length by mutual concessions. The election of bishops and abbots was reserved, the first to the canons, and the second to the monks, according to ancient usage; and the prince was no longer to be considered as investing the persons so elected with any thing beyond the temporalities of their dignity, and was in consequence to resign the use of the ring and crosier. But on the part of the secular power, it was also provided that every such election should be made in the presence of the emperor, or of his representative; that the ecclesiastic chosen should take the oath of allegiance to his sovereign;⁴¹ and that every dispute

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⁴¹ This had been prohibited nearly thirty years previously, by Urban the second, in the council of Clermont. "It is enacted that no bishop or priest

C H A P. between the suffragan parties should be referred to his
 I. decision as final.⁴²

Its conclu-
 sion.

The provisions of this treaty are still the law of the papal court, but the language in which they are stated, has been differently interpreted. A weak pontiff or a weak sovereign might admit an interpretation little favourable to his particular claims; but a consciousness of power invariably conferred a latitude of meaning on the terms of this reluctant compact. Indeed the history of the papacy, from the eleventh century to the age of Wycliffe, is the development of a continuous effort to realize that unlimited empire, which had received its ideal perfection from the genius of Gregory the seventh.⁴³ It was a scheme opposed to the rights of sovereigns, and of the provincial clergy; but their opposition was merely local, and always divided, and hence was usually inefficient. Kings are still dethroned, subjects absolved from their allegiance, nations laid under interdict, and their feudal subjection to the see of St. Peter often demanded. A priest, who could thus dispose of every security, presumed to be inherent in the laws of nations, would evince but little delicacy in his attempts to mould their religious institutions to his pleasure. Accordingly, under the name of universal pastor, the popes describe every form of power in the church, as emanating from themselves; and regard the disposal of its revenues and honours, as in every instance subject to their sanction. From these ambitious notions, proceeded the customs of provisors, commendams, annates, with the numerous modes of obtaining wealth, which were extended to every province of Europe, the effects of which are scarcely to be

shall promise upon oath liege obedience to any king or layman."—Mosheim, ii. 525.

⁴² In the above epitome of this memorable controversy I have been

guided principally by Mosheim, ii. 506, 524; iii. 43, 49. The question is one of those to which that historian has brought the whole of his learning.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, iii. 165—167.

paralleled in the annals of rapacity. In the ensuing pages, this general statement will be confirmed by details from our own ecclesiastical history; and that of some other states, if but partially consulted, would furnish a large portion of the same evidence. But the reader is probably wearied by these monotonous recitals of human frailty and corruption. It may therefore be agreeable to him, as well as due to our subject, before dismissing this introductory chapter, to notice some of the benefits certainly resulting to the states of Europe, from the christianity of the middle ages; considering it however, at the same time, in its deficiencies and positive vices, when compared with that purer system, the name of which it continued to assume.

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III.

SECTION IV.

RELIGION NECESSARY TO POLITICAL SECURITY.—PAGANISM OF GREECE AND ROME.—AND OF THE NORTHERN NATIONS.—FAVOURABLE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE STATES OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE.—THE DISCOVERIES AND TENDENCIES PECULIAR TO THE GOSPEL.—THESE STRANGELY OVERLOOKED BY THE CLERGY OF THE MIDDLE AGES.—THEIR GENERAL SYSTEM DEFECTIVE, AND IN MANY RESPECTS DEGRADING AND RUINOUS.

CHAP.
I.

Religion necessary to political security.

THE laws of men partake of the imperfections inseparable from human nature. If devoid of error and of injustice, they can apply but to our visible history, leaving the passions, those great springs of good and evil, wholly uncontrolled. Every culprit, also, will indulge the hope of escape from human sanctions: but true religion presents a standard of duty infallible and complete, enforced by the doctrine of a certain retribution, and of a retribution which the awards of an earthly judge can but faintly portray. The history of nations has in consequence demonstrated, that without some measure of religious faith, political security is a dream; and that impressions of futurity, in proportion to their truth, constitute the spring and safeguard both of public and of private welfare. The Athenian may smile at the solemnity of an oath, while the Roman is found regarding it with reverence; but the effect is soon disclosed in the ascendancy of Roman power.¹ The Roman also, may in his turn imbibe the scepticism of the more speculative Greek; but to copy the vices of

¹ Polyb. vi. 34, where the patriot historian feelingly deploras this degeneracy among his countrymen.

Athens was to share in her fall. The very imperfect code of obligations which the popular superstition had supplied might be abandoned; but atheism had nothing so wholesome to offer in its place; and hence, the tyranny and disaster which formed the decline of the most powerful empire the world has known.²

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IV.

It is true, the policy which had raised a temple to fidelity, and suggested the erection of others to the social affections, could not prevent the yielding of similar honours to licentiousness and contumely. Nor will this excite surprise, if it be remembered, that while Bacchus revels in his cups, Saturn murders his offspring; that Venus is described as a harlot, that Mercury is degraded by theft, and that Jupiter himself appears as the pattern of filial disaffection, stained with the guilt of perfidy, fornication, and adultery! Still when Plato determined to exclude the disciples of Hesiod and Homer from his imaginary commonwealth, because the authors of these demoralizing tales, the philosopher must have anticipated a state of society, capable of distinguishing between the tares of the popular system and its better produce.³ The doctrine of immortality, though on many points relating to it the most thoughtful men were most disturbed by uncertainty, was its master tenet. Very little, indeed, of purity was associated in the mind of the ancient pagan, with the notion of a future existence; and the trivial, and often worse than trivial occupation assigned to the objects of his worship, conferred upon the most favourable aspect of his future being a strange insignificance. Yet history has shewn, that even such a

Paganism of
Greece and
Rome.

² "As long as the religious principle remained, it controlled manners and checked the progress of luxury in proportion to its influence; but when atheism had corrupted this principle, the great bar to corruption was removed, and the passions were without

check or control."—Montague. On the Rise and Fall of the Ancient Republics.

³ De Nep. ii. 605, iii. 613. Cicero applauds the decision of the philosopher, and for the reason assigned. De Nat. Deor. i. 42.

CHAP. I. faith may be the conservator of a state, while to abandon it in favour of scepticism must be to introduce every element of political ruin.

And of the northern nations.

The difference between the superstitions of Greece and Rome, and those of the tribes by which the Roman empire was subdued, must be sought chiefly in the opposite character of the victors and the vanquished. The northern nations frowned on the incontinence, and the softer indulgences, which had arisen from the climate, or the luxury of their enemies, and which their deities were presumed to tolerate. But they were unmindful, or, perhaps, ignorant of the fact, that their own mythology had been no less accommodating to the propensities which characterized its votaries. If not so impure as that of Rome, it was more nearly connected with ferocious passion; and the contempt which it attached to the arts of industry, tended to the production of unhappiness, scarcely less than the vices which hastened the decline of Roman greatness. Their ancient creeds had proceeded from the same source, but had derived many peculiarities from the rudeness or the culture, from the martial temper, or from the more varied or harmless occupation of the nations in which they had been preserved. Fostering many errors, and many vices, they still continued to shed some rays of patriarchal light across the gloom which time and distance had created.⁴ But at the period of the Saviour's advent, those sublime conceptions of the unity and perfections of Deity, which had so charmed the contemporaries of Thales and Pythagoras, were obscured or lost; the age of reason had passed, and the world, instead of becoming more devout, as it became more enlightened, was fast descending, in its religious knowledge, as to a second childhood.

Favourable influence of christianity on the states of the western empire.

But if that degree of patriarchal truth, which was interwoven with the policy of gentile nations, continued

⁴ Mallet's Northern Antiquities. Tacitus, De Moribus, Germ.

through so long a period, to diffuse a preserving influence over the most important of the institutions and the feelings which link society together, it may be safely presumed that no corruption of christianity has been such as wholly to destroy its happier tendencies.⁵ Its effect, indeed, with regard to the spiritual destinies of man, from the age of Gregory the first, to that of Wycliffe, is a question of awful import, and of many difficulties; but that it bestowed many present advantages on its avowed disciples, even through that period, is evident. Much of what it produced might have followed as the result of civilization; but in the states of modern Europe, civilization was every where the offspring of christianity. It is in vain, therefore, to conjecture, as to what the condition of European society would have been apart from the influence of the christian faith, since it became what it is in the page of history, principally from that source; a state in which the usual possessions of civilized life are sometimes connected with a generosity of sentiment, and an equality of benefits, which civilized paganism never conferred. That industry, and that honourable thirst of independence, which the gospel enjoins on every disciple;⁶ the contempt of worldly greatness, so evident in its descriptions of present duty and of future honour; together with the domestic virtues, the public spirit, the hatred of strife, and the veneration of magistracy, which it so variously and so forcibly demands, all unite to render the gospel the most efficient scheme of human improvement ever announced to the world.⁷ Such at least is the concession which has been frequently extorted from its enemies.⁸ During the middle

⁵ It is worthy of observation, that the ancient lawgivers invariably confer upon their codes a *divine origin*, and plainly anticipate their efficiency but as enforced by *celestial sanctions*.

⁶ 2 Thess. iii. 7—15.

⁷ Ephes. v. vi. Rom. xii. xiii.

⁸ Analysis of Bolingbroke, sect. xii. —Rousseau, *Social Contract*. iv. 8. The same concessions form a part of the paradoxical theories of Hume, Gibbon, and Voltaire.

CHAP. I. ages its primitive aspect had, indeed, disappeared, but something of its spirit was still retained. Its opposition to the practice of lawless divorce, and to every species of impurity, was too striking to be evaded, and was often urged with success.⁹ Wherever published it was called to contend with the custom of human sacrifices, or with the equally cruel practice of infanticide, and it invariably abolished them.¹⁰ The assumed right of self-destruction, under whatever pretext maintained, was solemnly denounced;¹¹ and by the zeal of christian benevolence, the nations of the east and west were at length secured from the brutalizing influence of gladiatorial exhibitions.¹² The practice of deciding questions relating to property or morals by civil combat and ordeal, was common to the

⁹ Constantine demolished the temple of Venus at Heliopolis and mount Lebanon, prohibiting the impure rites connected with her worship. Euseb. Vita. Constant. iii. 5. Justinian, and the younger and elder Theodosius are among the princes of the empire, whose laws were directed to extirpate licensed fornication; and in later ages the instances are not few in which the licentiousness of sovereigns and their nobles was laudably checked by the persuasions or authority of churchmen.—Thomas, ii. 745, 757, 758, 762, 775. Greg. Turen. Hist. iv. 26. Baronius, 632, 639. Epist. St. Boniface, apud Spelman. 225. The apologies of the fathers prove the chastity of the early christians to have been alike singular and unquestionable.

¹⁰ Gibbon, ix. 248, 249.—We read also the inveteracy of this custom, in the traces of it which remained in Europe to the third and even to the sixth century. Porphyry de Abstinencia, ii. Procopius. De Bell. Goth. ii. 25. The absence of infanticide among the ancient Germans excited the surprise of Tacitus. De Moribus Germ. xix. The practice of exposing female infants to

perish by violence, or by the slow operation of famine, did not cease in the empire before the close of the fourth century, a date which prevents our attributing the event to an increase of civilization.

¹¹ There was much reproach attached to this crime in the earlier stages of Greece and Rome, but ere long it passed wholly away.

¹² In these exhibitions men were doomed to engage in mortal strife for the amusement of the populace and their rulers. The sport was introduced by the Bruti, when the combatants consisted of six persons; by Julius Cæsar, that number was increased to three hundred and twenty; and by Trajan, ten thousand lives are said to have been thus sacrificed for the public diversion.—Valer. Max. ii. 4, Plut. Dio. Cass. lxxvi. lxxviii. Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, and many other fathers, employed their eloquence to effect the suppression of these savage spectacles. In later ages tournaments were repeatedly condemned by ecclesiastical councils, as too nearly resembling these sports of pagan Rome. Martene, vii. 76.

northern nations; but it was frequently opposed by the christian priesthood, whose courts invited the litigants to a process of inquiry more favourable to equity, presenting amid the barbarism of the times the model, in many particulars, of our later jurisprudence.¹³ “The civil power was in those ages so inefficient for the preservation of public tranquillity, that when a country was at peace with all its neighbours, it was liable to be disturbed by private wars; individuals taking upon themselves the right of deciding their own quarrels, and avenging their own wrongs. Where there existed no deadly feud, pretexts were easily made by turbulent and rapacious men for engaging in such contests; and they were not scrupulous whom they seized and imprisoned for the purpose of extorting a ransom. No law, therefore, was ever more thankfully received than when the council of Clermont enacted, that from sunset on Wednesday to sunrise on Monday, in every week, the truce of God should be observed on pain of excommunication. Well might the inoffensive and peaceable part of the community, (always the great, but in evil times the inert, and therefore the suffering part,) regard with grateful devotion a power under whose protection they slept four nights of the week in peace, when otherwise they would have been in peril every hour.”¹⁴ A laborious comparison of the lives of pagan and of christian sovereigns has farther demonstrated that heathenism affords no security against violence and faction, like that derived from christianity;¹⁵ and a volume might be occupied in describing the evil propensities of monarchs, as controlled by the more humane genius of

SECT.
IV.

¹³ Robertson's Introduction, Charles V. sect. i. vi.

¹⁴ Book of the Church, i. 294, 295.

¹⁵ Fifty sovereigns swayed the sceptre of France eleven hundred years; while in the pagan state of the empire,

the same authority passed through the hand of nearly that number, within a fourth of the interval. See many similar illustrations in Bozius, ii. 368. 471. 667.

CHAP. I. churchmen.¹⁶ Hospitality, the proverbial virtue of primitive believers, was diffused through Europe with the faith of the gospel;¹⁷ while the permanent receptacles of the sick and the infirm, which arose from the benevolent zeal of Chrysostom in the eastern capital, were the first edifices which cities had devoted to such a purpose.¹⁸ But the fate of the prisoner and the slave was ever an object of peculiar solicitude with the more virtuous of the clergy. Instances of manumission by themselves, or by their influence, might be selected from almost every age and country; where the evil was not to be destroyed, its rigours were often greatly subdued; and in most cases the widow, or the defenceless in general, could not consult their interests better, than by appealing to the equity or compassion of their pastors.¹⁹

¹⁶ The fact that Englishmen are indebted in so great a degree to a prelate for their magna charta, may suggest that the influence of churchmen has not been *always* adverse to popular rights. It was an act of inhumanity which excluded the emperor Theodosius from the altar of the church; and a successful effort to prevent the effusion of blood, was among the last acts of our own archbishop Theodore. It must at the same time be confessed, that the sins of the clergy, with respect to the liberties of men, were far more numerous than their virtues. The pontiffs were not the only persons of their order who would fain have annihilated our magna charta.

¹⁷ Julian, ep. 49. Baronius, iii. 163. The absence of houses designed particularly for the accommodation of strangers or travellers, was supplied during the middle ages, when such intercourse was very limited, by the prevalence of this virtue, or by the penalties which were inflicted on the delinquent. Muratori Antiq. Ital. iii. 589. Robertson's Introduction, note xxix. A law of the Slavi, cited by

the last writer, sentenced the moveables of an inhospitable man to confiscation, and his house to be burnt, and even sanctioned theft, if committed from inability to supply the wants of a stranger.

¹⁸ The Athenians made a permanent provision for the children of soldiers who had fallen in battle, and the Thebans who reared the children of the poor, were encouraged by being allowed to retain them as slaves. These, however, were much less the measures of charity than of policy.—Arist. Pol. ii. s. Ælian, ii. 7. In a description of the various public buildings in Constantinople, at the close of the fourth century, there is not the remotest intimation of any one existing, as the result of charitable association.—Scriptores Byzant. vol. i. lib. xxii. For the altered state of things under the influence of a very imperfect christianity, see vol. xxi. lib. iv. p. 113. of the same work. Equally striking was the change induced in this particular among the western nations; see Du Cange. Cenodochium, &c. and Lindenbrog. Capit. lib. ii. c. 29.

¹⁹ Aristotle (De Moribus, viii. 13.)

Christianity which thus conveyed an improved morality, and much political benefit, to the converted barbarians, was also the parent of their learning. The soldiers of Scythia spared the Athenian libraries, that books might continue to enervate the Greeks, presuming with Theodoric the Goth, that the boy who had trembled at the rod, would shrink when a man from the sword or the spear.²⁰ Such was the spirit pervading the hordes among whom the Roman provinces were divided. But the establishment of christianity among those unlettered tribes, was the success of an enterprise which secured a continuance to the Latin, the Greek, and the Hebrew languages. The fact, that these languages were the depositories of heavenly wisdom, either as taught by inspired men, or by their immediate disciples, would induce some measure of attention to them, at least on the part of the priesthood. Hence the studies which were sometimes deemed the most important object of the collegiate or monastic life, and which so materially contributed to the diffusion of civilization and knowledge. It may be regretted that the number participating in the least tincture of learning, through the dreary interval adverted to, was so small; and still more, that ecclesiastics, who should have been its patrons, are sometimes found viewing it with indifference, with envy, and even struggling to impede its progress; but to other natures in the same order of men, we are almost wholly indebted for the literature which connects the fall of the empire with the revival of letters.

SECT.
IV.

To judge, however, of our obligations to churchmen during
The discoveries and tendencies peculiar to the gospel.

and Plato (De Legibus, iv. 858.) are among the ancient writers who conceive of the master and the slave as having an impassable gulf placed between their sympathies. That its removal in later ages is to be attributed to christianity, is evident from the many forms of manumission which have descended to us. In these a religious motive is almost invariably assigned; and it was accordingly required by various laws, that the act of liberation should be performed in a church. Robertson's Introduction, note xx.

²⁰ Zonaræ, Ann. xii. 26. Procop. De Bell. Goth. i. 2.

CHAP. the middle ages, it will be proper to pass from the review
I. of what they certainly effected, to a consideration of what
they might have accomplished. Had their zeal in the cause
of popular freedom, and of every thing serving to the embel-
lishment of life, been such as to confer on every state the
most enviable distinctions of Athens or Rome, it is evident
that this may have consisted with a corruption of christi-
anity, down to the level of that delusion, absurdity, and
vice, so prominent in the mythology revered in those cities
when in the zenith of their splendour. We needed not a
revelation from heaven, therefore, to aid us in preserving
the fine arts, or the forms of political liberty. It is
enough, indeed, to warrant a suspicion that the nobler
purpose for which christianity is imparted, has been
strangely overlooked, when much importance is attached
to its favourable influence on improvements, which have
flourished in independence of it, as in the ancient re-
publics, or in contempt of it, as among the disciples of
Mahomet. If reminded of that *moral* influence which
has so happily distinguished the ascendancy of the christi-
an faith, from that of the ancient idolatry, or of modern
Islamism, the fact may be admitted to the extent already
explained ; but the question still occurs—is this the whole
of what is proposed by those marvellous discoveries in-
cluded in the doctrine of the gospel ? The end proposed
by christianity is, to restore man by an exercise of the
divine compassion, to the state from which he has fallen ;
and by enlightening his mind, and creating within him
those spiritual sympathies which may qualify him for the
intelligent and sincere worship of his Maker, to prepare
him for the perfection and happiness of the celestial world.
The means which are employed with a view to this end,
are disclosed in the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ,
and in the gift of the divine Spirit ; the former securing
to the penitent offender the forfeited approbation of the

Almighty ; the latter producing on his spirit the lineaments of a divine image as the pledge of his ultimate destiny. Nor would there seem to be any certainty in language, if it be not a doctrine of the New Testament, that the persons to whom these tidings are conveyed can escape from future ruin, but as they truly confide in the atonement of the Saviour ; and from present depravity, but as they connect the employment of rational means with dependence on the aid which is promised from above. At the same time, to this faith and activity every thing included in the christian salvation is assuredly annexed. Christianity, then, is a system of truth, in which man is contemplated as a sojourner on earth, and in which to prepare for another world, where truth and purity hold their endless and undisturbed dominion, is regarded as the great design of present existence. Accordingly the instruction of man in the articles of christian doctrine, his emanicipation from lust, whether pertaining to the flesh or the mind, and his growing attachment to whatever is true, and holy, and benevolent, form the momentous result to which every ecclesiastical arrangement, in proportion to its christian character, will be strictly subservient. Providing in a degree peculiar to itself, for the present felicities of its disciples, it is on their approaching allotments that the gospel has lavished its sublimest powers of description, and from which its most eloquent appeals are made.

Such is christianity as it appears in the sacred writings, and in the compositions of its earlier disciples. But if such was its character, the causes which operated so injuriously on the polity of the church, have had a similar influence on its doctrine. The eucharist, and some truth of expression respecting the atonement of which it is commemorative, were retained. In the middle ages, however, the doctrine itself was either lost amid the general struggle for worldly power, or deprived of its efficacy by the various notions of personal

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IV.

These
strangely
overlooked
by the
clergy of
the middle
ages.

CHAP.
I.

merit,²¹ and by a dependance on the superfluous virtues, or friendly aid, of invisible guardians, who had become associated in the creed of the worshipper, with the "one Mediator" as procuring his salvation.²² The rite of baptism also was preserved, and was described as the sign of regeneration. But the change intended by that term, was presumed to take place in the unconscious infant at the font; and hence the violence of adult depravity, if it called for reproof and penance, was supposed to yield to the mystic power of priestly absolution, and thus was rarely inconsistent with the hope of future blessedness. The sacred scriptures, the common property of primitive believers, were a source of instruction which millions of baptized men in succeeding generations never saw; and which, had they existed even in the vernacular languages, and been accessible to laymen, scarcely a man in a province would have been able to decypher. Those statements of doctrine which were contained in the decrees of councils, or adopted in the established ritual, were said to be chiefly derived from that volume; and in rendering this aid it was regarded as having performed every thing to be reasonably expected from it, in immediate relation to the people.

²¹ Thus the manumission of slaves and bequests to the church are commonly stated to be, "pro redemptione animæ," or, "de redemptione peccatorum."—Du Cange. voc Manumissio, iv. 470. voc Servus, vi. 451. Muratori Antiq. Ital. v. 712. The *sentiment* of these more costly proofs of devotion, would naturally pervade the gradation of religious performances, and is but little accordant with that which it was the concern of apostles to cherish in believers, with respect to the appointed influence of the Saviour's atonement.

²² The following is a catalogue of the relics forming the most valuable possessions of the clergy in the cathedral church of Seville: "A tooth of St. Christopher; an agate cup used at

mass by pope Clement, the immediate successor of St. Peter; an arm of St. Bartholomew; a head of one of the 11000 virgins; a part of St. Peter's body; ditto of St. Lawrence; ditto of St. Blaise; the bones of St. Servandus, and Germanus; ditto of St. Florentius; the Alphonsine tables, left to the cathedral by king Alphonso the wise, containing three hundred relics; a silver bust of St. Leander, with his bones; a thorn from our Saviour's crown; a fragment of the true cross." On great festival days these are all borne in splendid procession, by great numbers of the clergy; and before a gazing populace this farce from the dark ages, is but too successfully repeated.—Blanco White's *Letters*, 272.

It is plain also that such was the ignorance of the popular mind, that the statements which were thus allowed to supersede the inspired record, proved susceptible of almost any interpretation which the weakness or the artifice of the individual priest might deem it expedient to suggest.

Even in the darkest ages, men may perhaps be discovered assigning to the doctrine of the Saviour's atonement something of the importance belonging to it; and treating the no less important tenet of regeneration with a hopeful measure of perspicuity. But through centuries previous to the age of Wycliffe, we look in vain, to the *system* established, or to its *general* influence, for the remotest indications of a scriptural religion. The majority of councils, in the different nations, are wholly occupied in the secular affairs of their respective hierarchies; the most enlightened rarely extending their solicitude beyond the reproof of scandalous offences, insisting perhaps, and with all gravity, on such a degree of culture in candidates for the clerical vocation, as might enable them correctly to repeat the daily formularies. These formularies also, were the mutterings of a language often unknown to the priest, and always a secret from the people; and hence the conventual or parochial "mass-men" contributed to the instruction of a religious assembly by their usual services, scarcely more than their predecessors, who had performed the same unmeaning office to some past generation, and had long slept in the mouldering sepulchres around them. It should be remarked likewise, that fully inspired with the genius of superstition, the papal system appealed less to the hopes than to the fears of its victims. The prevailing doctrine with respect to the heavenly state, contained scarcely any idea above that of mere repose, or of occupation, which if not wholly undefined, was by no means such as to require any peculiar discipline of our present capacities. Accordingly the trivial interference in human

SECT.
IV.

Their general system defective, and in many respects degrading and ruinous.

CHAP. I. affairs, and the petty jealousies in relation to power or possessions, which had been evinced by any popular saint during his sojourn below, were invariably attributed to him when advanced to his celestial dignity. These feeble and erroneous representations of the heavenly state, suppose a degree of ignorance as to the extent of human depravity, which is truly foreboding, because incompatible with the cultivation of those spiritualities of thought and feeling which alone constitute religion, or, in the language of St. Paul, a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. But there is not the same indistinctness, though there may be equal error, in the announcement of the penalties by which obedience was enforced. On the contrary, the scenes of purgatory and the region of despair, as exhibited in the devotional productions of this period, include all the tangible horrors which had stored the savage mythology of Odin. By these terrors the heart of the most fearless was often shaken, and the violence of passion was not unfrequently controlled; but the utmost solicitude was generally limited to the hope of escape from the penalty of sin, and that was usually anticipated without one attribute to qualify the spirit for the celestial abode—a state in which the perfected rectitude of every thought and emotion, will be for ever felt as its supreme and peculiar endearment. The Roman hierarchy found the nations of Europe lost to every such view of immortality, and ignorant, of course, respecting the means by which men may be prepared for its enjoyments; and as it found the mass of the European population in these respects, so after the flight of many centuries it left them. Nor will this alarming amount of spiritual negligence admit of any explanation favourable to the character of the clergy. The wealth which they so variously obtained from the sovereign, and from every class of the people, might have supplied the nations, even then, with bibles, or at least with some

important portions of that volume, and might farther have extended the means of no ordinary knowledge to every gradation of society. Nor is it less evident, that where the encouragement of delusion was not allowed to ensnare themselves as its victims, the ruling clergy must have known, that, at least, to *attempt* this moral revolution was their peculiar obligation.

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IV.

In the place, however, of such efforts, was the zeal which branded every generous enterprise with the name of heresy, which asserted the scriptures to be the possession of the priesthood alone, and which suggested the various modes of persecution forming so indelible a stain in the annals of the papal power. The maxims of injustice and cruelty, which were so long acted upon by the church of Rome, with respect to every class of dissenters from her communion, were too readily adopted by ecclesiastics in their provincial assemblies—imparting to the whole order an aspect of determined hostility, with regard to every attempt which might favour the return of a purer christianity. Thus the influence of Rome was not merely withheld from the cause to which it should have been devoted, but was employed, both immediately and remotely, to check its progress, and, in truth, to complete its extirpation. It was no trivial delinquency, to abandon the sluggish tendencies of human nature to those mechanical observances, in which it has ever been disposed to confide; declining nearly all effort to accomplish that discipline of its better capacities, which forms the end so distinctly proposed in the gospel. But to add to this, a positive prohibition of every measure most conducive to that happy result, was to assume the least equivocal marks of impiety and antichrist. Nor is it enough to ascribe the violence employed in this suppression of inquiry to some unyielding peculiarity in the times, inasmuch, as there were other, and more difficult cases, in which the laity were found

CHAP. sufficiently obedient to the will of the church. As the
I. agents of persecution, princes and their subjects were
what the clergy in their criminal laxity had allowed them
to remain from the period of their nominal conversion; or
else, and which indeed was more frequently the case, what
that order of men had laboured to make them. This
dread of inspection betrayed a consciousness of error; and
to supply the place of those sublimer objects of reverence
or attachment which the scriptures had presented, images
and pictures were introduced, to which men must bow
down; also the most childish dreams, as to the authority
of the virgin mother, the mediatorship of saints, and the
host of miracles performed by their spiritual agency, or
by their decayed bones and rotten vestments. On things
created, and on the very lowest of such things, the mind had
thus fallen; and on them it fixed to an exclusion of God
scarcely less sure and foreboding than under the influence
of the ancient idolatry. And while the credulities of
ignorance and superstition were thus unsparingly abused,
conscience itself was assailed, and virtually annihilated,
by the custom of auricular confession—a practice, the
abolition of which has proved the only remedy for that de-
pravation of morals which it is fitted to produce.

We may presume, however, that the extent of this great
apostacy was far from being generally perceived, inas-
much, as this adoption of the entire form and temper of a
worldly kingdom in the supposed church of Christ, arose
as we have seen, from a multitude of causes, and from
perverted ingenuity, variously operating through many
generations. It is only by a steady effort to escape from
the influences of prejudice, and by annihilating a conside-
rable interval of time, that we become in any just measure
sensible to the magnitude of the change which, in the
lapse of centuries, has passed on the christian profession.
“If the christian apostles, St. Peter or St. Paul,” ob-

serves Mr. Gibbon, "could return to the vatican, they might possibly inquire the name of the deity who is worshipped with such mysterious rites in that magnificent temple; at Oxford or Geneva they would experience less surprise, but it must still be incumbent upon them to peruse the catechism of the church, and to study the orthodox commentators on their own writings, and the words of their master."²³ Such are the sentiments which may be described as inseparable from an ingenuous comparison of primitive christianity, with that which has obtained in later ages; nor is there any thing in the pleas usually urged in support of these altered appearances to prevent their becoming the matter of a most painful regret with the mind which has been thus employed. Latin formularies may have aided in preserving the classic productions of that language; but this was more the result of accident than of design. From the period in which the Latin ceased to be a spoken language, there was but little either in the natural or the acquired taste of the clergy to render them concerned for the fate of such men as Virgil, or Livy. Certain it is, that the motives for retaining the language of ancient Rome in the liturgy of the church were in general quite distinct from the love of its peculiar literature. Were it not so, the christian must perceive, as the consequence of this adherence to an unknown tongue, a loss of religious instruction, of devotional feeling, and of future good, too great to be fully ascertained before the arrival of a day, when the smallest of such privations will be more feelingly deplored, than the total wreck of whatever Roman genius has produced. Hence to the mind properly affected by the discoveries of revelation, there is nothing in the magnificence of any structure which this successful tyranny has left to us, nor in the silent beauty of its loveliest ruins, to afford an unmixed pleasure. The moral taste is in such cases too deeply offended to allow the natural

SECT.
IV.

²³ Hist. ix. 351.

CHAP. its full indulgence. That negligence of the better and
 I. the living temple, though so broken and decayed, from
 which these stately piles derive their origin, is not to be forgotten; and if the doubtfulness or gloom of that futurity on which a benighted ancestry has entered, be the cost at which these monuments were raised, the fact is sufficient to convert the very effort which reared them into an offence of the most serious magnitude. It is also evident, that these imposing edifices were not only erected with means which might have been more charitably, more wisely, and more justly applied; but that they were designed to occupy an important place among the causes which conferred on the general delusion so permanent a power.²⁴

Such, indeed, were the abuses of the papal system, and such was the system itself, that to have become the agent of diffusing christian instruction would have been to hasten its overthrow as evidently embodying the spirit and the power of the predicted apostacy. So little also of real worth belonged to the priesthood for some ages previous to the appearance of Wycliffe, that to have divested that order of their supposed authority to remit offences, and to confer salvation by their various sacramental services, would in general have been to deprive them of their entire influence over the mind and the property of their people.

²⁴ It is remarked by Sir Joshua Reynolds, that "travellers into the east, tell us that when the ignorant inhabitants of those countries are interrogated concerning the ruins of stately edifices yet remaining among them, the melancholy monuments of their former grandeur and long lost science, they always answer that they were built by magicians. The untaught mind finds a vast gulf between its own powers and those works of complicated art, which it is utterly unable to fathom, and it is supposed that such a void can only be passed by supernatural means."—

(Works, i. Diss. vi.) Thus also the Koran attributes the erection of Solomon's temple to the same influence; and with similar monuments, similar legends have been every where connected. But as the magnificent structures raised by ecclesiastics during the middle ages were not to be considered as the work of individuals, but as those of the order, the operations of magic would not be suspected for a moment, unless it were the lawful as opposed to the forbidden, or an inspiration from above, and not from beneath.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE STATE OF THE PROTESTANT DOCTRINE IN EUROPE, TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

SECTION I.

STATE OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL POWER IN THE SIXTH CENTURY.—INEFFICACY OF CATHOLIC PERSECUTIONS.—ORIGIN OF THE PAULICIANS.—THEIR ATTACHMENT TO THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, THEIR DOCTRINE, PRACTICES, AND SUFFERINGS.—THEIR DISPERSION, AND THE DEGREE OF THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE MOVEMENTS OF REFORM IN THE WESTERN CHURCH.

IT has appeared, that the jurisdiction of the bishops of Rome, previous to the pontificate of the first Gregory, was cautiously limited and comparatively harmless. And if an authority hostile to freedom of inquiry was somewhat earlier assumed by provincial synods, or by general councils, we have seen that their dogmas were variously interpreted, and but partially received. Before the age of Constantine, we search in vain for more than the embryo of papal doctrine or of papal domination; nor is it less evident, that every subsequent step in the progress of pontifical power was preceded by the inroads of a debasing superstition. At the close of the sixth century, the simplicity of primitive faith and of primitive worship had almost disappeared; but it is not until after that period, that the ecclesiastical authority of the western patriarch may be considered as ascendant.

SECT.
I.

State of the ecclesiastical power in the sixth century.

A. D. 312.

CHAP.
II.

Inefficacy of
catholic per-
secutions.

It is, indeed, true, that in succeeding ages, the enlightened votaries of the christian profession compose but a small minority, and that they were commonly disowned by an interested order of men, and a barbarian multitude, who, while harmonious in little beyond the work of corrupting the faith and manners enjoined in the gospel, are to be revered as constituting the christian church. The religious independence assumed by a few scattered fraternities, would not fail to provoke the high minded displeasure of the clergy; and especially in the cases where the simplicity of their manners, and their purer doctrine, would be felt as conveying the language of reproof. Their history is in consequence that of piety assailed by persecution in every conceivable form, and with a most relentless perseverance. Measures the most atrocious were resorted to by ecclesiastics and by sovereigns, and that through many centuries, with a view to annihilate every vestige of opposition to established abuses. That a process so extended and so merciless should have been in almost uninterrupted action so long, and that its work of extirpation should be incomplete, may well excite a degree of astonishment. Judging of its effect, rather from what it promised to perform, than as the result of inquiries with respect to its real achievements, it would indeed be reasonable to conclude with the Romanist, that a christian church, distinct from the papal communion, could have no permanent existence in the ages previous to Luther. But that the faith so triumphantly defended by the reformers of the sixteenth century, has never failed to influence the mind of man, is a fact admitting of demonstration.

Origin of the
Paulicians.

The numerous sects which so early contributed to the beauty or deformity of the nominal church, were subject to constant vicissitude; but while most of their errors were to die a lingering death, the truths which they embraced survived to much later ages. In the seventh century, a

considerable remnant of these dissentients was proscribed under the odious name of Gnostics or Manicheans; and expelled the capitals of the east and west; stripped of wealth, of power, and in a great measure of learning, they were diffused among the villages and mountains bordering on the shores of the Euphrates. Their silence and obscurity had been for some time their protection; but at this period a reformer appeared, whose zeal, while it served widely to disseminate their doctrines, provoked anew the displeasure of their enemies. Constantine, an individual sharing in the exile and poverty of his brethren, offered the accommodation of his dwelling to a deacon returning from Syrian captivity, and on the departure of his stranger-guest, received from his hand a copy of the New Testament, as the reward of hospitality. The oriental clergy had already concealed this volume from the inspection of the people. With Constantine, it soon became a principal study, and was at length revered, as affording the only certain standard of religious truth. The writings which had imparted a light so welcome to his mind, would inform him of his duty to seek its diffusion, and he was not heedless of the admonition, nor did he labour in vain.¹

SECT.
I.

¹ For the above particulars we are indebted to the catholic writer, Petrus Siculus, who resided some weeks among the Armenian sectaries as a deputy from the emperor. In a subsequent part of his narrative, he has introduced an aged female Paulician, whom he describes as the tool of Satan, and as a fair specimen of her sect. She accosts a young man with some flattering remarks on his attainments, and with some expressions of surprise that he did not read the sacred gospels. His immediate reply was, "*It is not lawful for us profane persons, but for priests only.*" She then suggested whether it were not obvious from the scriptures themselves that they were

designed by their author for general perusal; hinted at the suspicious motives of the priests in concealing them; and, proceeding to read certain portions of the New Testament, the youth became interested, read the volume for himself, and was afterwards numbered with the most zealous of the Paulician missionaries. The anecdote illustrates the spirit of the historian, the ascendancy which the oriental priesthood had already obtained over their people, and the character of the means employed by the branded communities of Armenia with a view to diffuse a more scriptural piety, Mag. Pat. vol. xvi. 822, 823.

CHAP.
II.

It is supposed, and on probable evidence, that the name Paulicians, subsequently peculiar to this people, arose from their known preference for the writings of the gentile apostle. To the congregations scattered throughout Armenia and Cappadocia, they imparted the names of the churches to which the epistles of St. Paul were addressed; and a lingering fondness for the purer ages of the gospel, led them to discover the same pardonable weakness, in conferring the names of primitive teachers on such of their brethren as were appointed to the work of instruction. It was in the gospels, and the epistles, that Constantine and his followers sedulously studied the creed of the first believers; and it has been justly remarked that, "whatever be the success, a protestant reader will applaud the spirit of the inquiry."² If we yield implicit credit to the enemies of the Paulicians, we shall regard them as deeply infected with the manichean heresy, and, in consequence, as rejecting the Old Testament with abhorrence.³ The

² Gibbon, x. 168.

³ It is upon the whole an interesting account which the historian of the Roman empire has given of the Paulicians. He has left them, however, under the full reproach of the manichean heresy, and this has been done on the authority of an opponent, whose virulence has rarely been excelled, who is described by Mr. Turner as "their fierce enemy," and by Mr. Gibbon himself, as stating the tenets of that people, "with much prejudice and passion." And what is still more surprising, this occurs after recording that "*the Paulicians sincerely condemned the memory and opinions of the manichean sect, and complained of the injustice which impressed that invidious name on the simple votaries of St. Paul and of Christ.*" (pp. 169, 170.) Such, however, was the unhappy bias of that highly-gifted writer, that it is no breach of charity to suppose that

the character of the Paulicians would have been less agreeable to him, and less pleasingly exhibited in his splendid history, had he felt obliged to describe it as the effect of christian truth, and of that alone. The effort to annihilate the pretensions of the gospel, which is so painfully interwoven with the story of the Decline and Fall, consists principally in an indirect attempt to show that the virtues said to proceed from christianity alone, may exist without its aid, or in contempt of it, and to create a doubt as to the reality of such as appear to spring from that source. The doctrine of Manes, which will be frequently adverted to in this chapter, taught its disciples to regard the visible system, and the scriptures of the Old Testament, as the production of a malignant being, dividing the empire of the universe with a rival power, the father of all spiritual natures, and the source of benevolence. To exhibit the

reader, however, who is at all familiar with the history of religious disputes will be aware, that the inferences deducible, or supposed to be deducible, from any tenet, have been commonly urged by polemics as the formal doctrine of their opponents. It will be evident, also, that the slightest approximation of a creed deemed erroneous, to another of more acknowledged impiety, has often been sufficient to bring the entire odium of the latter on the adherents of the former; while, in other cases, the reproach which a few may have merited, has been most disingenuously cast upon the whole. As the New Testament could not be made to sanction that secular dominion which its accredited ministers had succeeded in establishing, it was their custom to appeal, in support of such innovations, to the less spiritual economy of Moses. The Paulicians, on the contrary, asserted that the obligations of the Jewish polity had passed away; but such was the spirit of the times, that this assertion alone would be enough to bring upon them the charge of belonging to the school of Manes. Any abandonment of the Levitical law, might be easily treated as a more artful method of entirely discarding the Old Testament;⁴ and on that peculiarity of the manichean scheme its remaining errors might be engrafted. By individuals, some still more plausible pretext for this

SECT.
I.

adherents of such a faith as superior in virtue to the orthodox, was not to concede any thing in favour of christianity. It is to a manichean creed that he attributes the fortitude of a band of martyrs, who are noticed in the same chapter as having perished at Orleans in 1017. The authority cited is Mosheim; but if the reader will refer to that historian (ii. 582.) he will find it recorded of those sufferers, that "the opinions for which they were punished, differ widely from the manichean system." The doctor, while unsparing in his censures of the hierarchy, was dis-

posed to quarrel with nearly all who seceded from it, and is plainly no friend to the Orlean martyrs. He is, nevertheless, obliged to admit that the front of their offending was a refined species of mysticism.—See Allix on the Albigenses, c. xi.

⁴ See a forcible illustration of this in the account contained in Hoveden (184, 186.) of the conference between the Albigenses and the orthodox at Alby, where the principal clerical disputant is described as sagely contending that to discard any portion of the Old Testament is to reject the whole.

CHAP. II. imputation would perhaps be afforded ; but if we dismiss the evidently partial and malevolent statements of their enemies, and adopt their own protest, the body of the Paulicians will be regarded as loathing the tenets which had deified the Principle of evil. Indeed, to an adoption of the exploded opinions adverted to, a subtle antagonist might have attributed that contempt of all worldly pomp, as connected with religion, which these injured sectaries were never anxious to conceal.⁵

Their attachment to the sacred scriptures, their doctrine, practices, and sufferings.

It is, however, sufficiently plain, that it was the study of inspired truth, which taught them to spurn so much of the fiction and mummery of their time ; and that the hope, which that truth had imparted, proved their strength in the hour of suffering. To suppose hastily, that the word of God, while thus honoured, would be found to leave its possessors in serious error on the most important articles of christian doctrine, must arise from weakness or from prejudice. “ The objects which had been transformed by the magic of superstition, appeared to the eyes of the Paulicians in their genuine and naked colours. An image made without hands, was the common workmanship of a mortal artist ; to whose skill alone the wood and canvass must be indebted for their merit and value. The miraculous relics were a heap of bones and ashes, destitute of any relation, perhaps, with the persons to whom they were ascribed. The true and vivifying cross was a piece of sound or rotten timber ; the body and blood of Christ, a loaf of bread, and a cup of wine, the gifts of nature, and the symbols of grace. The mother of God was degraded

⁵ It should be observed here, that from the rise of the Paulicians to the age of Luther, no one of the many superstitions which had become connected with the sacraments could be objected to without incurring the reproach of opposing the sacrament itself ; and an abandonment of the sacramental

emblems was an acknowledged peculiarity of the Gnostic and Manichean sects. It should also be stated, that such consequences may have arisen in many instances from that ignorance which, during the middle ages, was so general even among the sacred order. Mosheim, ii. 582, note.

from her celestial honours and immaculate virginity, and the saints and angels were no longer solicited to exercise their laborious office of mediation in heaven and ministry on earth. In the practice, or at least in the theory of the sacraments, the Paulicians were inclined to abolish all visible objects of worship, and the words of the gospel were, in their judgment, the baptism and communion of the faithful.”⁶ That the creed and worship of that people were distinguished by these peculiarities, is a part of their crime, as recorded by their enemies; and that sentiments deduced with so much faithfulness from the pages of inspiration, were associated to any serious extent with the manichean absurdities, should in candour be learned from unquestionable authority before it is admitted. As decisive on this point, it should also be remembered, that Constantine, whose successful zeal exposed himself and followers to the displeasure of the clergy and the empire, is described by his principal accuser as destroying his manichean library from the period of his attention to the gospel, and as producing in his disciples a contempt for their former instructors, and even of Manes.⁷ From this important notice, it appears probable that certain errors of manichean origin had been previously embraced by this reformer, and by some perhaps among his adherents; but from the same statement it is evident, that the zeal which provoked the more powerful hostilities of the orthodox, was the offspring of a much purer faith. Still as the change, to whatever degree experienced, was merely from one line of guilty separation to another—and to one, indeed, which it would be yet more difficult to remove, the effect must have been rather to augment than to subdue the resentment of their adversaries. And as no reproach could be greater than that which had been incurred by the tenets

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⁶ Gibbon, x. 170, 171.

⁷ Petrus Siculus, 820, 821.

CHAP. which had partially obtained among them from the writings
 II. of Manes, it was in character with the age, that it should still be connected with their opinions and worship, whatever changes they had undergone.

In a body of instructors, whose rank scarcely admitted a distinction between the shepherd and his flock, a precedence in honour was assigned to Constantine, who from the period of his conversion is called Sylvanus. Nor was it until the wheat of his doctrine had been sown with its tares, (whatever they were,) throughout the provinces of Asia Minor, that this devoted man perished as the victim of orthodox revenge. He had performed the arduous duties of his perilous mission twenty and seven years, when a royal decree sentenced every Paulician document to the flames, and such as should conceal their prohibited writings, or retain their heterodox opinions, to an ignominious death. Simeon, a Greek, appeared with his soldiers at Colonia, the residence of Sylvanus; he seized the person of the arch-heretic, placed him in the midst of his assembled followers, and, animated by the most violent hatred of their cause, announced the instant massacre of their chief, as the only deed which could demonstrate the sincerity of their return to the bosom of the church. Their filial hearts scorned the cruel overture. One only from the multitude could be found to accept of life on terms so odious. By the hand of that traitor Sylvanus fell; and the act, in a review of which another Judas might have wept, conferred an honour upon its author, which, in the esteem of catholic writers, was scarcely second to that of David when returning from the slaughter of Goliath. But the pleasure excited by that solitary instance of apostacy was soon disturbed by the rumours which now began to circulate respecting the probable conversion of Simeon himself to the faith of the persecuted. Their patience under suffering had produced an admiration of their cha-

acter; and that distinguished officer embracing the faith which he had endeavoured to destroy, was long known as one of the most effective of the Paulician missionaries, closing his career amid the honours of martyrdom. From this noble attachment to their faith, and to their pastor, evinced by the disciples of Sylvanus; and from this conversion of his leading persecutor, we derive an amount of evidence, with regard to the scriptural piety of this people, which is hardly to be affected by less favourable statements, which are often contradictory, and always imbued with the virulence of party.⁸

From the death of Sylvanus to the middle of the ninth century, the history of these disciples of St. Paul is that of a various effort to preserve their religious independence; and of attempts on the part of the established authorities, to convert what might otherwise prove a dangerous example, into a beacon, to prevent any future aspirations after the freedom which they sought. But teachers and churches arose in succession, as from the ashes of the slain; and such as could sometimes extort a degree of praise even from their enemies. Justinian the second, and Leo the Armenian, were foremost in the work of persecution; nor can the name of Michael the first, nor even that of the humane Nicephorus, be freed from this blemish. It remained, however, for a woman to surpass the most ferocious of the emperors in these sanguinary measures. The inquisitors of the empress Theodora

⁸ Such was the success of Sergius, who for more than thirty years laboured to disseminate the doctrine of St. Paul, that many of his contemporaries began to regard him as the leader of the great antichristian apostacy foretold by that apostle. Under this impression, or something nearly resembling it, Petrus Siculus vents his pious abhorrence by describing him as the enemy of the cross of Christ, the agent

of wickedness, the mouth of impiety, the hater of Christ, the wolf in sheep's clothing, the great champion of the evil one, and as the crafty pretender to all virtues. These mild epithets all occur in a very narrow space, and in the language of Mr. Turner they have but one meaning, viz. that Sergius taught with great effect.—Hist. v. 120. Sergius was the youth whose conversion is described in the first note to this chapter

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explored the recesses of lesser Asia, and after the interval of a few years, it was their boast that "a hundred thousand Paulicians had been dispatched by the sword, the gibbet, or the flames."⁹ But oppression may drive a wise man mad, nor is there any delirium so impetuous or terrible as this delirium of the wise. The massacre of a prelate, and of a magistrate the willing instrument of his intolerant councils, had already betrayed the growing disaffection, when the persecution commenced by Theodora created a wider spirit of revolt. The guards of the general of the east were then commanded by Corbeas, a soldier whose father had perished under the torture of Catholic inquisitors. He deserted the imperial standard, and such had been the impolitic ravages of bigotry, that five thousand of his brethren are described as sharing in his motives while they followed his example.¹⁰ Prudence suggested their alliance with the Saracen, but through more than thirty years the Paulician troops repulsed the forces of the empire; and when Michael, the son of Theodora, conducted his legions into the fastnesses of heresy, his defeat before the walls of Samosata yielded a harvest of wealth to the victors, and covering the imperial eagles with disgrace, laid a foundation for the ambitious designs of Chrosyochier, the successor of Corbeas. The new general, aided by his Moslems, traversed the provinces of Asia, pillaged Nice, Nicomedia, Ancyra, and Ephesus, converting the cathedral of the latter city into a receptacle for mules and horses.¹¹ The emperor Basil descended to

⁹ Gibbon, x. 176.

¹⁰ Ibid. 177.

¹¹ "It is not displeasing," remarks Mr. Gibbon, "to observe the triumph of rebellion over the same despotism which has disdained the prayers of an injured people." To this remark we may add the more profound observation of Montesquieu: "Every religion which

is persecuted becomes persecuting, for as soon as from some accident it rises from persecution, it attacks the religion which persecuted it, *not as a religion, but as a tyranny.*"—*Spirit of Laws*, xxv. c. 9. It was not until this period in their career that the Paulicians became known to their historian and adversary Petrus Siculus. His object as a de-

solicit the clemency of the victorious chieftain in behalf of his subjects, and would have purchased it with gold—but the elated sectary aspired to the dominion of the east. Accident at length achieved what the imperial legions had attempted in vain. Returning from a successful inroad, Chrosyochier was surprised and slain; and as his place was not immediately filled, his followers gradually retraced their steps, until the independence of the Paulicians in the east became limited to the securities afforded by the mountain or the desert.

Their progress westward is a subject of interesting inquiry; but the number of the emigrants, and their influence on the piety of European believers, are perhaps overrated. About the middle of the eighth century, they were introduced, and by royal authority, into Constantinople and Thrace. In the latter they sustained the violence of persecution, preserved a friendly correspondence with their Armenian brethren, and were of considerable civic importance so late as the tenth century. It was in the following age that the emperor Alexius Comnenus, appealed to their reason, their fears, and their cupidity, in the hope of restoring them to the communion of the faithful; but his decease was followed by the abandonment of every change which his influence had effected. Two hundred years later, and while their faith and manners appeared to have materially degenerated, the Paulicians, or at least communities who by their contempt of established customs had acquired that designation, are found scattered over Croatia, Dalmatia, Italy, and the south of France; bound to each other by various ties, but separated alike from the Greek and from the Roman church.¹² It has

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Their dispersion, and the degree of their influence on the movements of reform in the western church.

puty of the emperor Basil was to negotiate a change of prisoners. It may be that the spirituality of the sectaries had not been increased by the success of their worldly enterprises; we may

be assured they would not be thought the less sinners on that account by their enemies.

¹² Zonaras, ii. lib. xvii. 209. Anna, Comnena. Alexiad. lib. xiv. 450. The

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been observed, that "three different roads might introduce the Paulicians into the heart of Europe. After the conversion of Hungary, the pilgrims who visited Jerusalem might safely follow the course of the Danube; in their journey and return, they passed through Philippopolis; and the sectaries disguising their name and heresy might accompany the French or German caravans to their respective countries. The trade and dominion of Venice pervaded the coast of the Adriatic; and the hospitable republic opened her bosom to the foreigner of every climate and religion. Under the Byzantine standard, the Paulicians were often transported to the Greek provinces of Italy and Sicily; in peace and war they freely conversed with strangers and natives, and their opinions were silently propagated in Rome, Milan, and the kingdoms beyond the Alps."¹³ It should be remembered, however, that these emigrant sectaries were not a mercantile people, and hence it is not easy to conceive the motives which should frequently induce them to relinquish the security of Philippopolis for the dangers of a residence in Germany or France—dangers, which are supposed in the necessity of disguising their name and heresy. Venice also, though a nearer and a more generous locality, would for the same reason afford but a partial attraction; and the casual intercourse of Greek soldiers with the western population, could have sown the seeds of reform in no great profusion.

That the Paulicians were loosely scattered by such means over the regions extending from the fastnesses of

Cathari, who suffered death at Cologne in the former part of the twelfth century, described their sect as perpetuated from the time of the persecutions under pagan Rome, and as having long existed in Greece and in other countries. Allix's Remarks on the Albigenes.—Mosheim, ii. 578—580. By

the last writer, Basnage is noticed with something approaching to contempt, as too much concerned to add to the number of witnesses for the truth; and this, it must be confessed, is a weakness with which the doctor himself is far from being chargeable, ii. 581, 582.

¹³ Gibbon, x. 181, 185.

Armenia to those of Piedmont, will scarcely be questioned; and wherever diffused, the struggles opposed to ecclesiastical corruption would be aided by their hereditary zeal.¹⁴ But to conclude that the rise of such opposition among the nations of the west is to be attributed exclusively, or even principally, to the emigration of eastern sectaries, is to discard alike the suggestions of reason and the evidence of facts. The name Paulicians, and as expressive of heterodox opinion, was certainly familiar to the states of Europe during the middle ages. It is thus employed by our William of Newburgh, in the beginning of the thirteenth century. But the hands of the clergy had been so deeply imbrued in the blood of that people, as to make the abuse of their creed an act of self-defence; and hence their name became, what has been in every age no small convenience to weakness and bigotry, a term of reproach to be applied to the faith or the manners of the minority, however diversified. That the designation was often unjustly conferred in the west is certain; nor can it be needful to devise expedients for introducing the Paulicians into Europe, as the principal agents in producing its revolt from superstition, while that event admits of explanation from causes which are nearer and more obvious. The corruptions of the eastern church, by which the piety of Sylvanus and his followers was so greatly scandalized,

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¹⁴ From a passage in Mariana, (Bib. Mag. iv. part 2, p. 581,) Mr. Turner supposes, and with a degree of probability, that some of the Paulicians accompanied their Moslem allies into Saracen Spain, (Hist. v. note.) But that the sectaries of Alby derived their doctrines from the Paulicians of Leon, is a somewhat strained hypothesis. Mosheim states as the result of his inquiries on this intricate subject, that persons of this sect settled first in Sicily, Lombardy, Liguria, and the

Milanese, but he does not suppose that their emigrations included any considerable number, until toward the middle of the eleventh century, (cent. xi. part. ii. c. v.) It is curious to observe the solicitude of the western catholics to make that root of bitterness, religious disaffection, an *exotic*, and their attempts to save their particular countries from the supposed disgrace of having been the first to harbour the Paulician heresy, the supposed parent of so much evil.—Gibbon, x. 184, 185.

CHAP. were far surpassed in the western division of Christen-
 II. dom.¹⁵ In both the word of God, the great foe of delinquency was withdrawn from the people; but into some hands capable of improving the gift, that volume would pass, and the suspicions of clerical integrity which existing practices must often have excited in the more discerning and ingenuous, would be thus matured into a class of opinions levelled to the humblest capacity, and arrayed in relentless hostility against the established system and the detail of its abuses. As all the causes which produced religious disaffection under the eastern hierarchies, existed even with greater vigour in the west, the same results may be expected to proceed from them independent of any foreign influence. What reason would anticipate in this respect, history confirms. Admitting, therefore, the importance of those auxiliary services which were no doubt rendered by the Paulician teachers to the great event of the western reformation, it is equally proper to remember that the inspired doctrine to which they were in general devoted, has never failed to obtain disciples in either division of the nominal church.¹⁶

¹⁵ It is thus Mr. Gibbon speaks of the Latin as compared with the Greek church: "Her avarice was oppressive, her despotism odious, less degenerate perhaps than the Greeks; in her worship of saints and images, her innovations were more rapid and scandalous; she had vigorously defined and imposed the doctrine of transubstantiation; the lives of the Latin clergy were more corrupt, and the eastern bishops might pass for the successors of the apostles if they were compared with the lordly prelates who wielded by turns, the crosier, the sceptre, and the sword." Hist. x. 184.

¹⁶ The fashionable doctrine, which makes every thing good the effect of transmigration, has influenced the his-

torians of literature scarcely less than those of religion. This notion, as pursued by the former class of writers, has been powerfully refuted by a living author. Adverting to the origin of the poetic genius evinced by the German Troubadours of the twelfth century, it is remarked, that "M. Ginguene will not even allow the smiling descriptions of the beauties of nature, the joyous revelling or the genial influence of spring, the delights of fields, of flowers, of rocks, and groves, to be natural ornaments of poetical imagination, 'tout cela est ORIENTAL,' he observes. Surely Görres is more philosophic in his observation, that it was easier for our forefathers to search in their own breasts for the feelings which

breathe in their poetry, than to mine the inaccessible rocks of foreign manners and language." Lays of the Minnesingers, pp. 35—39. Viewing the religion of the Bible, quite apart from that protecting power which is distinctly promised to give it perpetuity, its revivals are in general more easily explained on the ground of that moral discernment which is not the product of climate, and that degree of access

to the sources of religious knowledge which has never wholly failed, than upon any of those complex theories which are contrived to waft it ever from a distance. The truths of natural science may have been commonly handed thus from one community to another, but our moral perceptions, and whatever relates to the imagination and the feelings, must be less dependent on circumstances.

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SECTION II.

SIGNS OF PRIMITIVE PIETY TO THE AGE OF CHARLEMAGNE.—NOTICES OF PAULINUS, AND OF CLAUDE OF TURIN.—THEIR FOLLOWERS SURVIVE THE PERSECUTIONS OF THE ORTHODOX.—THE MARTYRS OF COLOGNE, AND THE NUMBER AND CHARACTER OF THE SEPARATISTS FROM THE ROMISH CHURCH IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY.—DOCTRINES OF THE LA NOBLA LEYCZON.—NOTICE OF PETER DE BRUYS, AND OF HENRY.—ARNOLD OF BRESCIA.—PETER WALDO.—THE ALBIOENSES.—ST. DOMINIC, AND ST. FRANCIS.—PERSECUTING EDICT OF LUCIAN THE THIRD.—ITS FAILURE, THE INQUISITION, AND THE CRUSADES AGAINST THE ALBIGENSES.—REDUCED STATE OF THE PROTESTANT DOCTRINE IN EUROPE THROUGH THE CENTURY PREVIOUS TO THE AGE OF WYCLIFFE.

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Signs of primitive piety to the age of Charlemagne.

FROM the first century to the fourth, christianity proclaimed the divinity of its origin by its triumphs amid the successive persecutions of pagan Rome. Its history, since the conversion of Constantine, has largely developed the good or evil arising from that secular control to which it has been subject through the east and west from that period. Before the close of the seventh century, the general corruption of the christian doctrine is but too evident. Still it is a fact, and one supported by evidence which no ingenuity can evade, that the worship of the Almighty after the manner of primitive times was still maintained, and at intervals by a numerous seed. With these servants of the "God of heaven," the sacrifice of a Divine Mediator, and the grace of the Eternal Spirit formed the only ground of religious confidence. They are sometimes discovered as separated from the nominal church, and sometimes as consulting their personal safety, by an

adherence to certain of its forms.¹ But so early as the seventh century, the sequestered districts of Piedmont appear to have been viewed by these disciples of the ancient faith, as affording a probable asylum from clerical oppression. It should be remembered also, that the same age was distinguished by the labours of Sylvanus, and the consequent revival of the Paulician doctrines in the east. In the Gallic provinces attempts had been made before this period to impair the simplicity of the eucharistic services, to define the efficacy of prayers for the dead, and to divest the sacred writings of that paramount authority which the Head of the church has assigned to them. These efforts to secrete the key of knowledge, and to aid the cause of priestly usurpation and of the growing superstitions, were consistent with each other, and arose from the same source; but they were opposed at every step of their advancement, and not unfrequently with the most encouraging success.²

During the reign of Charlemagne, Paulinus a royal favourite and the bishop of Aquilia, employed his voice and his pen to arrest the progress of these and similar corruptions, exhibiting the scripture doctrine of salvation in its primitive simplicity.³ In the year 804, his honourable

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Paulinus
and of
Claude of
Turin.

¹ Even in Rome, the "poor men of Lyons" and their associate sectaries appear to have been for some time regarded as an order of lay devotees, who, without proposing to leave the pale of the church, aspired to the possession of heaven by a path of peculiar sanctity. Muratori, *Antiq. Ital. Diss.* 60, tom. v. 83. We learn also from the sermons of St. Bernard, (Canticles 65, 66,) that the Waldenses were often punctual in their attention to the service of the church. Reiner, who wrote some years later, affirms that their object was in general to criticise the established formularies, and

especially the preacher. *Contra. Wald.* c. vii. 765, 766.

² Allix on the Albigenes, c. i. vii.

³ The worship of images and the confused notions which began to be promulgated respecting the eucharist, were powerfully resisted by Paulinus, as were the undue pretensions of the bishop of Rome. The works of this prelate are abundantly explanatory of his religious opinions. "The Son of God," he remarks, "our Almighty Lord, because he redeemed us by the price of his blood, is properly called the true Redeemer, by all who through him are redeemed. He, I say, was

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career was terminated, and a few years later it devolved on the celebrated Claude of Turin, to check the same abuses, to advocate the same truth, and to scatter more widely the seeds of future opposition and reform. The sovereignty of the Redeemer in his church was so maintained by this prelate, as virtually to annihilate the ambitious pretensions of the Roman see. The worship of images he denounced as gross idolatry; the childish veneration of relics he exposed to its deserved contempt; and discarding prayer for the dead as the device of man, his zeal bowed to no authority in religion opposed to the obvious meaning of the sacred scriptures. Explaining the doctrine of justification by faith alone, with a force and perspicuity not unworthy of Luther, the papal scheme of merit was greatly broken and impeded by his labours. More than twenty years of his life were devoted to this warfare against the prevailing superstitions, and to the cause of christian truth as embraced by its earliest disciples. The result is seen in that hostility which arose from the weakness or the vices of contemporaries, in the extent to which his opinions were disseminated, and in their influence on the piety even of remote generations.⁴

not redeemed, because he was never captive; but we are redeemed who were captives sold under sin, and bound by the hand-writing that was against us, which he took away blotting it out by his blood, which the blood of no other redeemer could do, and fixed it to his cross openly triumphing over it in himself." Allix on the Churches of Piedmont. Fleury, v. 238. 241, 242. 271. Paulinus was celebrated for his learning, and was the friend of Alcuin; and it was a farther commendation of his doctrine and attainments, that one of his compositions long passed for a production of Augustine's.—Dupin, cent. viii. 124.

⁴ Allix on the Churches of Piedmont, c. ix. where the statements of my text

are fully proved. Fleury's narrative is to the same effect, v. 396—398. Claude derided the superstitious uses to which the material cross was applied, and it was in character with the mode of disputing at that period that Dungal, a monk, and his principal antagonist, should, in consequence, accuse him of rejecting "the passion and the incarnation." Mr. Turner (v. 116.) speaks of the work of Dungal, as "one of the best defences of image worship." The author, however, has trusted much less to the force of his reasoning than to the array of his authorities, his production consisting of little beyond a series of citations. Mag. Bib. Pat. vol. iv. pars iv. pp. 115—199.

The episcopal authority of Turin extended over the vallies of Piedmont; and that the faith defended by Claude was preserved in that locality through the ninth and tenth centuries, is the testimony of catholic writers.⁵ Before the close of this period, the fires of persecution were kindled in that favoured diocese, in the hope of consigning both the name and the doctrine of its distinguished reformer to oblivion. But in the hour of trial the disciple was often found to be worthy of his master; while the zeal of such as were expelled their home, increased by a natural process with the increase of suffering, never failing to convert the fact of their dispersion into the means of imparting a more extended influence to their obnoxious creed.⁶

A company of these exiles, wandering to escape oppression, at length fixed their residence near Cologne, in Germany. Their singularities soon attracted the notice of the clergy; and the event has served to disclose much of the faith and character of this injured people, at the commencement of the twelfth century. Evervinus, a German ecclesiastic, thus writes concerning them to the great St. Bernard. "Certain heretics have been recently discovered among us near Cologne, of whom some have

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Their followers survive the persecutions of the orthodox.

The martyrs of Cologne, and the number and character of the separatists from the Romish church in the twelfth century.

A. D. 1140.

⁵ Allix on the Albigenses, c. xiii. "Oh! how difficult a thing it is," exclaims the ancient monk of Vaux Cernay, "to pluck up a deep rooted custom. This treacherous city of Tholouse, from its very foundation, as it is said, hath seldom or never been clear of this detestable plague, this poison of heretical pravity."—Ibid. p. 119. Leger, i. c. ii. Reiner numbers the antiquity of the Vaudois, as contemporary according to some with pope Silvester, and according to others with the apostles, among the principal enormities of that sect.

⁶ Leger. c. xx.—xxii. xxviii. Per-

rin's Hist. The last historian informs us, that in one of the earlier persecutions referred to in the text, a Vaudois named Catalan Girard, requested when at the stake with his companions, that two flints might be given him; on receiving them he threw them on the ground, exclaiming, "Sooner shall I feed on these stones than ye shall have power to destroy by persecution the religion for which I die," (part ii. lib. ii. c. iv.) The reader may see this period of Vaudois' history efficiently treated in the third volume of Dr. Rankin's History of France.

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with satisfaction returned to the church. One who was a bishop among them, together with his associates, openly opposed in the assembly of the clergy and laity, the lord archbishop himself being present with many of the nobility, maintaining their heresy *from the words of Christ and his apostles*. But finding that they made no impression, they desired that a day might be named in which they should bring forward men skilful in their faith, promising to return to the church provided their teachers were unable to answer their opponents, but declaring that otherwise they would prefer death to a renunciation of their doctrine." Such, however, was the temper of their judges, that the equity of this appeal was wholly lost upon them; and proceeding to brand the accused as incorrigible heretics, the people are described as seizing their persons and committing them to the flames with infuriated triumph. The heroism of the sufferers threw the mind of Evervinus into the greatest perplexity, and suggested his application to the superior wisdom of St. Bernard for instruction. Attempting a definition of their heresy, he describes them as contending "that inasmuch as they are alone in their contempt of all secular aggrandizement, they are alone in following the footsteps of Christ and his apostles, and that they in consequence form the only true church on earth. Their opponents, on the contrary, are accused of being ever employed in adding house to house, and field to field, and of allowing this worldly infection to extend even to monks and canons at the cost of their most solemn vows. Claiming a spotless morality, appealing to their industry, their temperance, and the simplicity of their devotion, they are said to compare their state to that of the ancient martyrs who fled from city to city as lambs among wolves. The clergy are at the same time censured as lovers of the world, and as therefore at peace with it, as false apostles corrupting the word of God, and as thus

lost through many generations to the sanctity of their vocation. Receiving the opinions in which they have been educated, as the *pure doctrine of the apostles*, they treat the existence of purgatory as a delusion, reject the invocation of saints as impiety, and disclaim all subjection to the pontiff as strictly forfeited by the secular nature of his present jurisdiction. In a word, *all things observed in the church which have not been established by Christ himself, or by his apostles, they describe as superstitious.*" Such is, in substance, the character given of the sufferers at Cologne, by an ecclesiastic who had been a party to their fate, and who, in consequence, had no motive to confer upon it the least share of favourable colouring. 'To stimulate the zeal of St. Bernard, his correspondent reports, that the sect "had great numbers of their adherents scattered nearly every where, and that among them were many of the clergy and monks."⁷

This appeal of Evervinus was not made in vain; but the eloquent defender of orthodoxy had much to learn respecting the sentiment and character of his new opponents. After some charges of delinquency, preferred with the hesitation naturally resulting from defective evidence, the confessions extorted from the pen of St. Bernard have raised these calumniated sectaries to a commanding position in the view of posterity. "If you ask them of their faith," writes this renowned controversialist, "nothing can be more christian; if you observe their conversation, nothing can be more blameless; and the sincerity of their language they prove by the consistency of their deeds. In testimony of his faith you may see a man of this order frequent the church, honour its elders, offer his gift, confess his sin, and partake of the communion; and what can be more expressive of the christian? In life and manners, also, he circumvents no man, defrauds no man, does

⁷ Allix on the churches of Piedmont, 110, &c.

CHAP. violence to no man. His fasts are frequent, his bread is
 II. not that of idleness, his labour procures him his support.”
 So harmless, and so truly scriptural, was the tendency of
 the faith embraced by these dissenters, even in the es-
 teem of the powerful polemic, who was employed to
 annihilate their creed with the weapons of reason and
 authority.⁸

Doctrines of
 the La No-
 bla Leye-
 zon.

Egbert, who in the twelfth century was abbot of Scho-
 nage, has borne a similar testimony to the faith and man-
 ners of these communities. He states, indeed, that they
 were divided into several sects, but adds, that each main-
 tained its opinions by the authority of scripture; and that
 they were so far increased, as to be found “in great
 numbers throughout all countries.”⁹ To the concessions

⁸ Bernard’s sermons on the Canticles, (65, 66.) The preacher dwells particularly on the text, “Take me the foxes,” &c. &c. The charges of pride, of innovation, and of insincerity, were quite in place from the pen of an orthodox opponent. But when the secrecy of the Vaudois’ assemblies is made a crime, the saint should have remembered, that this arose much less from the inclination of his antagonists than from the intolerance of his own order. He triumphs over the relapse of some, but is perplexed by the constancy of others, and severely reproaches certain lords and ladies, and even prelates, as affording an indirect sanction of this mistaken people.

⁹ The words of Egbert are, “Omnes terras multiplicati,” (Mag. Bib. Pat. tom. ii. pp. 99—106,) and the signs noticed by the abbot, as those of an heretical people, are just those which bespeak their purer christianity. His describing them as “the worst of poisons,” is not surprising; but we are more interested in learning that the evil deplored was universal (andique). It is Egbert, also, who informs us, that the seclusion of a manufactory, of

a cellar, or of some subterranean region, was often resorted to by these separatists for the purpose of conducting their religious exercises. He likewise states, that he had frequently disputed with them in the neighbourhood of Cologne. Mosheim has noticed these sects under the name of cathari or puritans, in his History of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries; but appears to admit the accusations of their adversaries much too easily. Those defenceless societies had a persecution to sustain, as relentless and unprincipled as that with which the first christians were assailed by pagan Rome. It was asserted that the purpose for which the primitive believers assembled in their secret places, was to feast on a slaughtered infant, and to indulge unnatural lusts; and those charges were said to be confirmed by the confessions of the tortured. The same crimes were imputed to this people by papal Rome, and were said to be proved by the same species of evidence: nor is it more easy to vindicate the first christians against such calumnies, than the body of the cathari. Without descending to the weakness

which were thus made respecting the doctrine and character of these ancient separatists from the papal communion, and made by men who were deeply interested in opposing their progress, we may add the still more decisive evidence supplied by their own compositions. **LA NOBLA LEYCZON**, or “the noble lesson” is a poem in the language of the Troubadours, and a production highly curious, as bearing a date so early as the last year in the eleventh century. To the historian of literature it is valuable, to the historian of religion it is peculiarly so, as pointing with certainty to the ark of piety amid the obscurities of that remote and gloomy period. It is alone sufficient to demonstrate the weakness of the hypothesis which first degrades the Paulicians with the charge of manicheism, and then makes them give existence to the Cathari and Waldenses. No trace of that heresy is to be discovered in this ancient record of the Vaudois’ faith. On the contrary, it is the depository of opinions, and an expression of feelings, not unworthy of the professors of the gospel in the most favoured period of its history. Including no small portion of scripture history, it exhibits especially the leading events in the life of the Saviour; and dwelling with particular interest on the doctrine of the fall of man, and on his present weakness and temptations, it adverts with equal truth to the grace of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as affording the strongest inducements to confide in their clemency for pardon, and in their constant presence for all spiritual aid. While it recognises the great law of nature, it assigns a precedence to that of Moses, but declares the law of Christ to be complete, superseding the officious wisdom

of concluding every fraternity immaculate which may be found protesting against the corruptions of the papacy, justice assuredly requires, that the character given of them by their known

enemies should be received with the last degree of caution.—Eusebius, *Hist. iv. c. 20.* Allix on the Albigenses, c. ii. 8, 9. Fleury on the Manners of the Early Christians, part ii. c. xv.

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of man, and all future communications from heaven. The devotional feeling which it discloses, is at once ardent and enlightened, generally clothed in the language of inspiration; and it is with emphasis that it inculcates the lessons of the Redeemer in his sermon on the mount, which abolished the law of retaliation, demanding of all who would honour his precepts, or follow his example, to return blessing for cursing, good for evil. It describes the known virtues of the Vaudois, as constituting a noble but a dangerous contrast to the manners of the age; and as exposing them to a severity of treatment rarely incurred by an open practice of the vices which their spirit and their conduct tended to reprove. Amid these sufferings, however, they appear calmly resigned to the will of heaven, anticipating the speedy dissolution of a world which had thus persecuted martyrs and confessors before them, and confiding in the promise of a triumphant entrance on the better region prepared of old for the disciples of Jesus, and the blessed of the Father.¹⁰

Notice of
Peter de
of Henry.

It was in the century commencing with the year following that in which the above document was completed, that Peter de Bruys became distinguished in Provence and Languedoc, as the intrepid advocate of certain reformed opinions; and his zeal, after the labour of twenty years,

¹⁰ Choix des poesies originales des Troubadours, tom. ii. La Nobla Leyzon. A copy of this poem was brought into England by Sir Samuel Moreland, minister of Oliver Cromwell to the Duke of Savoy, and was deposited in Cambridge. That ancient manuscript has been collated with another preserved in the library of Geneva, by M. Raynouard, the editor of the work cited above. In the analysis given by Mr. Turner, is the remarkable passage which has long been familiar to the curious. "It there be

any one who is good, and fears Jesus Christ, who will neither curse, lie, nor swear, nor be adulterous, nor kill, nor rob another, nor avenge himself, *they say he is a Vaudois*, and worthy to be punished, and by falsehood or deceit they find accusation against him, and take from him what he has." But the sufferer is said to comfort himself with the assurance that "he shall have great glory if he has endured dishonour." Hist. v. 125—128. Bresse's History of the Vaudois, c. ii.

sustained the trial of martyrdom. On his decease his place was more than supplied by the learning and the invincible ardour of Henry, the founder of the sect called Henricians. But if Henry imbibed the zeal of his predecessor, he had also to share in his reward. The invective in which these preachers had indulged on the manners of their age, and especially on the vices of the clergy, was not to be patiently endured. It roused the displeasure of the pontiff's and of their court; and in the name of Eugenius the third, the person of Henry was seized and committed to prison, where, after a brief interval, his life was the sacrifice incurred by his unshaken integrity. Such are the measures which were long and widely adopted to crush the leaders of reform, and experience has shewn how little they were suited to diminish either the number or the ardour of its advocates. Of the religious doctrine promulgated by Peter de Bruys and his successor, we have indeed but little distinct information. But from the creed, and the spirit, which had been so forcibly inculcated in "the noble lesson," and which appear to have been, with some occasional exceptions, common to the multitude dissenting from the established worship; and from the statements also, which have been transmitted to us by their enemies; we may safely conclude that these preachers had embraced the substance of the christian doctrine, and that the errors with which it was associated were not such as to prevent their treading in the footsteps of apostles and evangelists. It is certain that they denied what has since been called the real presence in the eucharist; that they asserted the inefficacy of prayer for the dead; that they discarded the papal doctrine of merit; and that, constantly reproving the licentiousness of the clergy, they treated the usual ceremonies of the church as the machinery of superstition,

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II.

A. D. 1100
—1150.

CHAP. and were accustomed to meet in separate assemblies for
 II. instruction and worship.¹¹

Arnold of
 Brescia.

A. D. 1150. But if the Petrobrusians and Henricians were sufficiently numerous to excite the alarm of the church, it is certain they were but few and feeble when compared with their opponents. It was toward the close of the century, in the former half of which they had flourished, that the ear of Europe became familiar with the name of Arnold of Brescia, as that of a more daring opponent of clerical ambition. This extraordinary man had suddenly risen from the lowest rank in the church, and there are facts included in his history, which impart to it an unusual interest. The reader is not assuredly to be envied, who can refuse to admire the genius which in such an age could devise a plan of ecclesiastical reformation, more complete, perhaps, than has yet been realized in any nation of Christendom; and which sustained a course of activity and suffering in the cause of its own theory, evincing a patience of toil and a fearlessness of opposition, pertaining less to the character of actual occurrences than to that of fable or romance. Such, however, was the mind, and so hostile to many a venerated custom, were the doctrines of Arnold. He had studied under the famous Abelard, and had probably adopted some of the speculations which exposed the lover of Eloisa to the frown of the church. But with the skill of the master, the disciple associated an independence and hardihood peculiar to himself. In

¹¹ Mosheim, ii. 116—118. The fourteenth chapter in Dr. Allix's Remarks on the Ancient Churches of the Albigenses, is devoted to an examination of the doctrine promulgated by Peter de Bruys and Henry, and is a sufficient vindication of their character. Had Henry been the profligate which Baronius describes, St. Bernard would not

have had to lament so feelingly the multitude of his followers; nor is it probable, that the saint would then have incurred the guilt of being the chief agent in bringing his theological opponent to atone for his erroneous opinion at the stake. Ibid. pp. 128, 129.

the garb of a monk and with a countenance which bespoke his decision and capacity, but which had already become marked with many cares, Arnold commenced his stormy career, as a preacher in the streets of Brescia. The kingdom of Christ he ventured to describe as not of this world; secular honours and possessions he also dared to maintain, could justly belong only to the laity. On the total relinquishment of such anti-christian appendages, by every gradation of ecclesiastics, he loudly insisted as being the claim of the gospel, and as essential to their salvation, even to that of their accredited head. Tythes and voluntary oblations still remaining, would, it was contended, be every where enough to ensure that frugal supply which is alone in place with the ministers of Christ.

The corruption of the church had proceeded so plainly from its accumulated wealth and its encroachments on worldly offices, as to prepare numbers in every community for listening to these revolutionary tenets; and announced with an eloquence worthy of a more cultivated age, and by a preacher whose purity of morals and whose contempt of gain no enemy could impeach, they were hailed in many an assembly of the populace with bursts of acclamation. Arnold's diocesan forsaken by his flock, appealed from the reasonings of an obscure monk, to the authority of the pope. Innocent the second, accordingly, convened a general council of the Lateran, before which this daring innovator was admonished to appear. The summons was obeyed. But the enemies of the accused were his judges: he was sentenced to perpetual silence; and passing the Alps found an asylum at Zurich, where he is presumed to have left the seeds of his doctrine to vegetate until the age of Zuinglius.

The appearance of Arnold before the Lateran council, was soon regarded by its members as a disastrous event. It had contributed to introduce his name and opinions to

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the notice and attachment of the Roman people; and in that city, degenerate as it was, the disciples of the exile multiplied daily. But so intoxicating is the possession of power, that the persecution which expelled the offender from his country, was allowed to follow him into his retreat; and it appears, at length, to have fixed the desperate resolve which placed him suddenly in the midst of his friends, within the gates of the capital. To unfurl the standard of revolt, as beneath the shade of the vatican, was an enterprise equally novel and perilous. Familiar alike with the civil and the religious history of Rome, Arnold dwelt with a commanding eloquence on the exploits of the Bruti, the Gracchi, and the Scipios, and on the saintly character of the martyrs who had perished in the cause of her ancient and her better christianity. With a glow of patriotism, and we must presume of piety too, he urged the restoration of the forgotten laws of the republic, and required as a measure strictly essential to produce a return of the purity and the triumphs of religion, that all authority in the pontiffs and the clergy should be limited to the spiritual government of the christian commonwealth. So momentous a revolution was not to be in any considerable degree anticipated without some bursts of popular violence, and these may have been viewed with sincere regret by the discernment of the man who, however innocent, would be reproached as their author. But in Rome, and for nearly ten years, the influence of the monk of Brescia presided, while several contemporary pontiffs trembled within its walls, sunk beneath the cares of their tottering empire, or resorted as exiles to the adjacent cities. It was long, however, since the voice of freedom had echoed among the seven hills, and her authority in the present instance was precarious and of short duration.

Adrian, the only Englishman who has filled the chair of

St. Peter, had no sooner assumed that dignity than he displayed a firmness and policy adapted to the alarming exigencies of his station. A cardinal was either slain or wounded in the streets of Rome, and the new pontiff instantly pronounced an interdict upon the guilty city, suspending every formality of public worship through several months. It was an untried and a bold expedient. The Romans, who had resisted every political demand of the popes, had not learned so freely to question their spiritual power; and the majority were induced by this gloomy chastisement to accede to the banishment of Arnold. The reformer again became an exile, but in his second retreat was sheltered for awhile by his patrons, the viscounts of Campania. He soon learned, however, that this successful effort of the papal court was merely preparatory to still more decisive measures. Frederic Barbarossa was ere long to receive the crown of the empire from the hand of Adrian. In an interview previous to the ceremony, the pontiff laboured to shew, that the heresy of Arnold was not less hostile to political than to ecclesiastical government; and the emperor conceded, or professed to concede, the truth of the doctrine. By such docility the official services of the chief pastor could hardly fail to be secured. The religious sanctions which were attached by such formalities to the exercises of regal power, were of no little moment during the reign of superstition; and it is too well known, that for objects of much less importance, the interests and the lives of individuals have been at all times considered a trivial sacrifice. Forced from his concealment in the name of the Cæsar, Arnold was conducted by a strong escort to Rome. He was there arraigned before the prefect of the city, was condemned to die, and deserted (perhaps of necessity) by his more powerful adherents, he perished at the stake amid the idle gazings of the Roman populace.

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A. D. 1155.

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His ashes were given to the Tiber, but his opinions were not so easily consigned to oblivion. If no sect survived to venerate him as its founder,¹² his spirit of enterprise and its measure of success; that constant reference to the scriptures of the New Testament as an ultimate authority; and that critical attention to the features of christianity in its earlier stages, which the whole controversy so powerfully induced, must all have served to diffuse a new vigour into every sect, and into every struggle in favour of truth and piety. His triumphs, so far as they extended, would be seen as those of equity opposed to usurpation, and that while the latter stood intrenched by the remote antiquity of its birth, and guarded by another barrier usually deemed invulnerable,—the custom of nations. If our information respecting him has left his theological opinions in some degree doubtful, the silence of his enemies may be allowed to exonerate him from any very serious delinquency on such points. It is possible, indeed, and even probable, that his religious tenets would have been found in some measure peculiar, and have called for clerical reproof, had not the resentment of that order been so completely directed from such matters by his more alarming assault on that secular policy, which evil passions and the lapse of time had placed in alliance with the hierarchy.¹³ This he viewed as the source of all its corruptions, regarding every hope of renovating the ecclesiastical system as vain, if not founded on the pre-

¹² We read, indeed, of Arnoldists in the later periods of ecclesiastical history, but the name appears to have been almost confined, after an interval, to those who were zealous for the establishment of the senate in the capital, or to the followers of Arnold, a celebrated Waldensian preacher.

¹³ His opinions with respect to the eucharist and baptism were said to be heterodox. Allix on the Churches

of Piedmont, 169. Dupin makes the same statement, but records, that, when banished the city by Adrian, the Tuscans received him as a *prophet*, and affirms that the motive for burning his remains was lest his followers should *worship* him. (cent. xiii. 89.) These are facts which place him before us as a religious, and not as a political reformer.

sumption of effecting this exterior revolution. To treat the character of Arnold as that of a mere political declaimer, is evidently to violate the law of charity and justice. There is nothing known respecting him, inconsistent with sincere and enlightened piety; no principle on ecclesiastical polity received as his, which is not at present maintained, and as of the highest importance to the cause of uncorrupted christianity, by myriads among the most devout of mankind. Nor is there any thing authenticated as an action of his life, which might not be paralleled from the lives of many distinguished men, whose benevolence of purpose, and unfeigned devotion are rarely questioned.¹⁴

In the disputes which had arisen between monarchs and the pontiffs concerning investitures, and which it required the age of Luther to extinguish, the doctrines of Arnold were of frequent utility. As they failed not to strengthen that disposition to examine the validity of sacerdotal claims which produced the memorable controversy described, they were silently performing the most important service to the cause of freedom and religion. It was in this manner that the struggle of the Brescian reformer, political as it appears, proved greatly subservient to the progress of those religious truths, which in the ninth century were so ably defended by Claude, of Turin. We have seen that after an interval of nearly three centuries, the doctrine of that distinguished prelate was fondly cherished, and cherished with a simplicity truly surprising, by the Vaudois: and that many, if not the whole, of his peculiar

Peter
Waldo.

¹⁴ The above facts respecting Arnold, have been adopted principally on the authority of Dr. Allix, Gibbon, and Mosheim. That Arnold had not embraced any doctrine inconsistent with scriptural piety is either affirmed or implied by each of these writers. Those

principles of action, however, which commanded the admiration of Mr. Gibbon, are slightly reprehended by Mosheim, not indeed as wrong in themselves, but as carried to somewhat of excess.

CHAP. II. opinions were widely disseminated by the itinerant efforts of Peter de Bruys and of Henry his reputed disciple. It was in the year 1148, that the latter perished as the victim of persecution. But ten years from that period had scarcely passed, when Peter Waldo, an opulent merchant of Lyons, became known in that city as an opponent of the Romish superstition, and a zealous advocate of what has since been designated the reformed faith.¹⁵

Waldo had witnessed the sudden decease of a friend at his table, and a disposition already favourable to religion was much confirmed by the affecting incident. Often scandalized by the manners of the clergy, his superior education had enabled him to consult the Latin Version of the scriptures. From that source he derived the instruction which taught him to separate from communion with the papal church. His morals had ever defied the breath of calumny; from this period his wealth ministered largely to the comforts of the poor; and if his opposition to vice and error exposed him to the malice of interested men, his fearless enforcement of the truths of the gospel won the applause and the grateful attachment of multitudes. For a season he found his protection in his rank, in the influence of his connections, and in the number of his followers; but the inroads of his zeal, which had thus eluded every hostile purpose of the local authorities, were at length deemed so serious an innovation as to require the most formal interference of the papacy. In a council convened by Alexander the third, Peter Waldo and his numerous disciples were presumed to be convicted of heresy; and until signs should be given of repentance,

¹⁵ The life of Waldo is fully recorded by Perrin, *Hist. c. i.* See also Leger, *l. i.* Centuriators, Magdeburg. cent. xii. Basnage, tom. ii. Usher's *de Successione. Catalogus Testium Veritatis.* Limborch's *History of the*

Inquisition, lib. i. c. 8. The history of these people has also been variously treated by Natalis Alexander, *Hist. Eccles.* Thuanus, *Hist. l. v.* and in Bossuet's *Histoire des Variations.*

they were cut off from all communion with the faithful. This sentence would probably have been little regarded, had it not, through the ferocity of the times, become no less destructive of civil than of religious communion. Such of the Lyonese as were not prepared to brave the wrath of the church, were constrained to refuse the hated sectaries even the remotest intercourse of social life.¹⁶ That flourishing city was in consequence deserted by a large, and by the most valuable portion of its inhabitants; but like the Hebrew tribes, they were not to be lost in their dispersion. Waldo continued to publish his doctrine, and with great success, through Dauphny, Picardy, and various of the German states, concluding the labours of twenty years in a province of Bohemia. His disciples, every where harassed by the hand of persecution, are still found associated with almost every continental sect; and by a benevolent arrangement of providence, they were preserved as witnesses for the truth until the age of Luther.¹⁷

Aware of the assistance which he had derived from the scriptures, and of the principles which assert them to be the property of the people no less than of the priest, it had been an object of early solicitude with Waldo, to confer upon his followers a translation of the inspired volume in their own tongue.¹⁸ It was a novelty in modern Europe, and contributed much to his unprecedented success in the work of reformation. The "noble lesson" had long since supplied the devout with a valuable summary of scripture history, and of the doctrines and the duties of the gospel;

¹⁶ Such was the decision of the council of Turin in 1163, Baronius, *ubi supra*.

¹⁷ Perrin, c. i.

¹⁸ This is particularly noticed by Reiner, in his list of the causes contributing to diffuse the Waldensian heresy, (c. iii.) It should be stated also that he speaks of the Old and the

New Testament as thus placed in the hands of the people. The consequence he relates has been that "whatever a doctor of the church teaches, which he does not prove from the New Testament, they consider as entirely fabulous and contrary to the authority of the church."

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but such was the impulse given to the mind of multitudes by the possession of the scriptures, that the numerous sectaries, however poor and despised, were generally capable of vindicating their peculiarities of custom or opinion by an appeal to that authority. It was even their boast, that there was scarcely a man or woman among them, who was not far better read in the Bible than the doctors of the church. Nor will this be doubted if it be remembered, that it is an enemy who states his conversing with a rustic who could repeat every verse and term of the book of Job, and with others who were scarcely less familiar with the whole of the New Testament.¹⁹ The ecclesiastic recording these facts, has subscribed himself as in "time past a heretic," and was a man who would be fully aware that to indulge in any friendly remark on the faith or character of his former associates, would be, as in similar cases, to create a suspicion of his present sincerity. This is one of the worst evils of apostacy. This writer evidently intends to degrade the Waldenses when he describes one of their travelling merchants as exposing his robes and trinkets before an opulent family, and on selling his articles as replying to the question,—Have you nothing more?—by lauding the virtues of a certain jewel in his possession, but which he dares not discover, unless he may obtain a pledge of protection from the resentment of the clergy. Curiosity excited, the promise is made by the party, and the stranger produces a vernacular gospel, a gem, brilliant from God; reads some of its more interesting portions, and if the auditory be observed to feel pleased with his recitals, he ventures on the denunciations against the scribes and pharisees, not unfrequently pointing them

¹⁹ Reiner, c. vii. 747, 766. This Rhainerius Saccho, as he is frequently called, had been an accredited disciple of Waldo seventeen years, when his apostacy raised him to the honourable

office of inquisitor. His catalogue of the Waldensian errors consists of thirty-three articles, and may be seen in Allix on the Churches of Piedmont, 188—191.

against the monks and the clergy.²⁰ It is not difficult to suppose with this historian, that by such means an impression was often made on the rich and powerful, unfavourable to the pretensions of churchmen. But the tone of morals which pervaded these communities must have been of no ordinary character, since it could extort from such a writer, and in such an age, the concessions found in his narrative. It is this same Reiner, once a Waldensian, and afterwards a relentless persecutor, who describes these people as grave and modest in their manners, and plain in their apparel; as often declining the snares of commerce from their aversion to falsehood, oaths, and dishonesty; as careless of accumulating wealth, being satisfied with little; as chaste and temperate, especially those of Lyons; as remarkable for the placidity of their temper; never frequenting taverns, mingling with the dance, or with other vanities; but ever employed in labour, in reading, or in communicating knowledge.²¹ If piety is to be at all determined by its fruits, these statements from a contemporary and an opponent must be decisive of its reality in the case of the Waldenses. It would be easy, however, to add to their force by copious citations from many ancient documents relating to that people; some of which have descended from themselves, and others had been supplied by their adversaries. It will be easily credited that at a period illumined only by the first twilight of knowledge, some absurdities of opinion would be observable in the creed of these fraternities, and that the diversity of their manners would not always be the result of wisdom. Such an effect was inseparable from the existence of societies, so numerous, so widely diffused, and adhering with so much tenacity to the almost forgotten right of private judgment.²²

²⁰ Reiner, c. vii. 766.

²¹ *Ibid.* 765.

²² The perplexing variety of names by which the sectaries of the middle

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The Albigenses.

That the Cathari of Germany, and their brethren, the Vaudois, were free during the former half of the twelfth century, from any serious error respecting the faith or the obligations of the gospel, has appeared on the evidence of the most certain authorities; and to the same points, with respect to the Waldenses, the testimony borne by Reiner is no less decisive. But the Albigenses were sufferers beyond their brethren; and to justify their peculiar punishment, no effort has been spared to give to their alleged offences a special enormity. It is probable that the name Albigenses arose from the council of Albi, an assembly convened in a locality bearing that name, and in which certain sectaries were condemned in 1176. It is unquestionable, that from that period it was a designation applied to a numerous people, denounced as heretics, and resident in that city and its neighbourhood. It is also evident that the parties who were censured in that assembly, under the general name of Albigenses, included the various multitude who had been confirmed in their aversion to the established superstitions by the preaching or

ages are known, will admit of some classification. When they are called Bulgarians, Lombardists, Toulousians, &c. it is evident the name is derived from places, and not from persons. When they are designated Catharists (or Puritans,) Publicans (or Paulicians), Fratracelli, (or men of brotherhood,) or are described as poor men of Lyons, some peculiarity of their profession, or character, or circumstances, is plainly intended. The followers of Peter de Bruys were called Petrobrusians; those of Henry, Henricians; and those of Arnold, Arnoldists. Hence the name Waldenses appears to proceed very naturally from Peter Waldo, the reformer of Lyons. But the occurrence of the word Vaudois in the Nobla Leyczon, proves its use to have been much older

than the age of Waldo. The Waldenses were inhabitants of those VALE localities which skirt the base of the Alps and Pyrenees. From the Latin, VALLIS comes the provençal VAUX or VAUDOIS, and the Italian VALDESI. Hence, the designation VALDENSES, UALDENSES, or WALDENSES. We have seen that these vallies were through many ages the asylum of seceders from the Romish church, or at least of men who were often disposed to question many of its pretensions. These had so far increased at the period of Waldo's ministry, that a Waldensian or a VALLEYMAN, became but another name for a heretic. The edicts of Frederic the second against heretics, describe them as existing under a multitude of different and strange designations.

the martyrdom of Henry, and of Peter de Bruys. Against those reformers the old and convenient reproach of manicheism was employed, but with as little appearance of truth as in many previous instances. It is obvious, that the records of the inquisition of Toulouse are an authority to be adopted with caution. From this source, however, and from the writings of Alanus, a contemporary, it would appear that there were persons among the Albigenses, who were sincerely regarded as of Paulician origin, and as infected with the doctrine of Manes.²³ At the same time, from a patient comparison of the evidence preserved to us, it is not only easy to suppose, but it is in the highest degree probable, that these mistaken men formed but a small minority in the country of the Albigenses. Yet their existence, however thinly scattered, would be sufficient to afford a pretext for branding the whole, agreeably to ancient custom, with the odium attaching but to the opinions of a part. Such were the circumstances peculiar to the Albigensian dissenters; and they have served to render their faith and manners the subject of a more modified approbation than has been generally conferred on those of the Vaudois. But that much the greater number

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²³ The work of Alanus is intitled *Contra Albigenses et Waldenses Paganos et Judæos, opus quadripartitum*. The first thirty-five chapters of this formidable production are occupied in refuting the manichean and gnostic tenets, as errors maintained by the Albigenses; and it may be thought unreasonable to suppose that, after all these formalities of attack, the enemy assailed was one of the imagination only. It should be remembered, however, that such was the disputatious spirit of schoolmen—and Alanus was the “Universal doctor,” as often to create opponents, from their passion for the knightly exercise of destroying them; and the very title of the work

published by this disputant, proposing as it does to annihilate all the known errors of the world, bespeaks his love of conflict. In addition to which, it should be recollected that Alanus was a native of Flanders, and through the greater portion of his life a resident in the university of Paris; and that his statements of the most objectionable tenets imputed to the Albigenses are often given in a manner which betrays his imperfect information, and his consciousness that the errors attributed to some were certainly rejected by others. The reader may see some curious extracts from this work in Dr. Allix on the Albigenses, c. xvi. xvii.

CHAP. II. comprehended under both appellations, were, with respect to every important question of piety and morals, the same people, is either the implied or the direct testimony of every age through which they have survived.²⁴

St. Dominic,
and St.
Francis.

To check the progress of opinions so hostile to the maxims of the papacy, was an object too important to be overlooked. It was to meet this exigency that the order of preaching, or, as they are more properly designated, of begging friars, was instituted. That unlimited renunciation of property, which formed a distinctive feature in the discipline of these fraternities, was expected to secure them from the many corruptions which opulence had introduced among the secular clergy, and which even the convent had so feebly resisted. Their promised appeal, also, to reason or persuasion, in support of established usages and opinions, was a measure adjusted by the same policy to the improving spirit of the times. But we have seen, and shall again see, that the vow of poverty, whether framed by the severity of St. Dominic, or of St. Francis, was not so strict as to be in no way eluded; and history

²⁴ Mosheim, ii. 580. Of the credit to be given to the charge of manicheism as preferred against nearly all the dissenters from the Romish church, through the whole interval from the rise of the Paucians to the age of Wycliffe, a judgment may be formed from the conduct of the pontiff Boniface, in 1302, with respect to Philip the Fair. The French monarch asserted his claim to dispose of certain benefices in his kingdom; this the pope challenged as his own unalienable right, declaring in his celebrated decretal *unum sanctum*, that there are two swords in the church, the spiritual and the temporal—that the temporal is subject to the spiritual, that to deny this is to affirm the doctrine of two distinct and independent principles, and so to fall into the heresy of the

manicheans! (Dupin. cent. xv. 5, Collier, i. 497, 498.) If such was the ground of this odious accusation as preferred by pontiffs against the most powerful sovereigns, a much less plausible pretext, if such were possible, would be sufficient, in the hand of inquisitors, to bring its reproach and its punishment on the defenceless Albigenses.

It is of that sect that a contemporary and an enemy exclaims, "Thus does the spirit of falsehood, only by the appearance of a *pure and spotless life*, lead away inconsiderate people from the truth." To concede the influence of heresy to be so far better than that of orthodoxy as to turn the scale against it, was not altogether politic. Guil. de Podio Laurentii, c. viii. 672.—Sismondii Crusades, c. i. 14.

has informed us that the heresies which neither the arguments nor the rhetoric of the mendicants could expel, were readily yielded to a process of coercion; and one, which, as it insulted every dictate of the understanding, was but ill adapted to remove the alleged estrangement of the heart.

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It was in the year 1179 that Peter Waldo finished his prosperous career; and it was two years later that the pontiff, Lucian the third, issued his memorable decree, "condemning all manner of heresy, by whatever name denominated." This enactment required the prelates of Christendom to denounce the censures of the church against heretics with the return of every public solemnity; and to explore their diocese at least once a year, that spiritual offenders might be every where detected. It at the same time adjudged every bishop who should be found "slow herein," to a suspension for three years, from the exercise of his episcopal functions. Every layman convicted of heresy, and refusing to abjure his opinions, was left by the same decree "to the sentence of the secular judge, to receive condign punishment, according to the quality of the offence;" while the secular authorities, forbearing "to execute the ecclesiastical and imperial statutes when required," are excommunicated, their power transferred to others, and their goods confiscated to the use of the church.²⁵

Persecuting edict of Lucian the third.

But the zeal of the provincial clergy was cold and unequal when compared with that of the papal court. The mendicant orders, though introduced but to debate the questions of heresy, were soon viewed as more promising instruments of arbitrary power; and with little difficulty they were placed at the head of a political machinery,

Its failure.

²⁵ The spirit of this enactment is expressed in a previous decision of the council of Toulouse, (1119), and it is seen embodied, as the more

authoritative doctrine of the church, in the twenty-third canon of the second general Lateran council.

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The Inqui-
sition.

which had been recently framed to maintain the despotic authority of Rome. From this period, wherever the influence of the pontiff's could extend it, that of the friars was carefully directed to make inquisition into heresy, and to seize the persons of the suspected. In the cells of their prison house the unhappy victims of intolerance suffered every species of torture; and thence were often conducted to the stake, ignorant, alike, of their crime, of their accusers, and of the evidence on which they were condemned. The diocesan clergy might have been expected to resent this innovation, as diminishing their local authority; but they were generally appeased, either by the freedom which it secured them from an odious employment, or by the nominal importance which was conceded to them, as associated with this new order of spiritual judges. It is also true, that this malignant institute invaded the province of the magistrate scarcely less than that of the secular priest. But it was arranged that a third of the confiscated property should pass into the civic treasury: on the civil power it also devolved to nominate the inferior agents to this holy office; and to it was reserved the doubtful honour of inflicting every public penalty on the guilty.²⁶ It is obvious, however, that it is not to the prevalence of sentiments favourable to religious liberty, or to general science, so much as to the encroachments of this tribunal on the civil rights of men, that we must attribute the modified state of the inquisitorial courts in some countries, and their total exclusion from others. The reader who would learn how far the tree of despotism may strike its roots in the soil of these western kingdoms, and the extent of that poisonous shade, which it has the power of diffusing, may acquire this melancholy lesson by consulting the histories of Portugal or Spain. Within the limits

²⁶ Sismondi attributes a considerable delay in the establishment of the inquisition to these causes. Crusades i.

of Arragon and Castile, eighteen courts of inquisition were established, each with its prisons and its gradation of officers; while, from the whole, not less than twenty thousand familiars went forth as spies among the people, to detect, by every expedient, the seeds of heretical pravity. The nation which has most freely submitted to this yoke of antichrist has had its reward. That the grave of its freedom was that of its virtue and energy, is manifest in that ignorance and cruelty, and in that superstition and distrust, which have so strongly marked the character of the Spaniard, and so disfigured his history both in the old world and in the new.²⁷

But the signs of religious disaffection had become so formidable in the beginning of the thirteenth century, that a more summary mode of procedure than was consistent with the forms even of an inquisitorial court was deemed important to the safety of the church. Eighteen of the most considerable towns in the south of France, are described as being principally occupied at that period by Waldenses and Albigeois. While the clergy were enjoined to confute the doctrine of the heretics, and to deprive the obdurate of catholic communion, the magistrate was instructed to prove his religious fidelity by punishing them with exile, or with that separation from every social connection which it was known could be less easily endured. The more severe of these mandates, however, whether too much at variance with humanity, or too plainly the offspring of political ambition, were far from being religiously observed. Over the mind of the persecuted, the censures of a hierarchy, which they had been taught to loathe as corrupt in every part, could have no power. To escape from the civil consequences of their religious opinions was their only solicitude; and those opinions, however

²⁷ Limborch's Hist. Voltaire's History of Europe, e. c. xviii. Sismondi, c. v.—

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heterodox, by contributing to their habits of industry, and of civil subordination, had rendered them of such political importance, that their appeal to the local nobility for protection was often made with success. It may be, that this conduct of their superiors arose in some instances from the calculations of a worldly policy; but in others, it appears, as the consequence of a more religious feeling. At length, however, the demon of persecution is allowed to seize its prey. By the haughty Innocent the third, every motive which superstition could supply was employed to arm the princes and the people of Europe against the pacific disciples of the gospel.²⁸ To extirpate them by fire, and by the sword, was the object distinctly proposed; and the indulgencies so impiously connected with the crusades into Asia, were now as freely bestowed on such as became devoted to this murderous cause. But this desperate scheme was too comprehensive to be suddenly accomplished; and to gain time, or to impart the appearance of justice to the intended desolations, a conference was proposed with the Albigensian teachers. The challenge was accepted; but a pledge of safe conduct was required; and it was farther demanded that the sacred scriptures should be alone decisive of the questions at issue. These conditions admitted, it was in the year 1206 that the delegates of the opposite parties assembled in the town of Montreal. The accusations of the catholic disputants

Crusades
against the
Albigenses.

²⁸ That the activity of this pontiff kept pace with his ambition appears from the fact that not less than 2000 of his letters have survived to the present period, extending to two volumes folio, (1682.) In 1208, an inquisitor, who had grossly insulted Raymond the sixth, count of Toulouse, was afterwards killed by an attendant of Raymond's who had witnessed the offence. Innocent suspected Raymond's participation in the deed, but without the

shadow of proof, and instantly required that he should be publicly anathematized in all the churches; and delivering it as a canonical decision of the holy fathers, "that we are not to observe faith toward those who keep not their faith toward God," he discharges every man from all oaths either of alliance or fidelity to Raymond, declaring his property alienated and his person infamous.—Petri Vallis Cern. c. viii. 561. Sismondi, i.

were presented in writing, and the Albigensian divines had extemporaneously replied to them through four successive days, when their opponents betrayed the weakness of their cause by announcing the approach of the crusading army, and abruptly dissolving the convention. This alarming communication was not devoid of truth. A hundred thousand cross bearers—for so were the crusaders designated—speedily encircled the walls of Toulouse. These, it is stated, were soon joined by twice their number, and the command of this terrific force was divided between a band of feudal chieftains and certain ecclesiastical dignitaries.²⁹

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The crusades, which had so long rolled the tide of war from the west toward the holy sepulchre, had yielded so little advantage, and had been attended by so much loss and suffering, as to possess, at this period, but a feeble influence over the passions of the European population. The honours of a future world, which were supposed to be ensured by such acts of devotion, might be valued; but the chances of plunder were few, and the prospect of bearing it to the security of home when obtained was nearly hopeless; while life itself was in constant jeopardy from the perils of climate, and from encounters with no common adversary. But in the proposed invasion of Toulouse, another scene was opened for the display of this fanatic heroism; and one which, while it secured every present exemption, and entitled to every future good, that had been connected with the exploits of the former, presented a few only of the difficulties, and as few of the

²⁹ The number of these marauders, as given by different writers, is from fifty to five hundred thousand. Petri Vallis, Cern. xvi. 571. Hist. gen. de Langnedoc, lib. xx. c. 53. pp. 167, 168. Perrin. iii. c. ii. Sismondi, c. i. The last writer remarks, that if we adopt the smaller number, "we must not

include in this calculation the ignorant and fanatical multitude which followed each preacher armed with scythes and clubs, and promised to themselves that if they were not in condition to combat the knights of Languedoc, they might at least be able to murder the women and children of the heretics."

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dangers which had been inseparable from them.³⁰ Among the chiefs conducting the multitudes who were thus animated to this war of extirpation, we find Eudes the third, duke of Burgundy, the counts of Navar, of St. Paul, of Auxerre, of Geneve, and of Forez, and Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester. The latter nobleman, who was lord of a castle ten leagues from Paris, had possessed the countship of Evreux, had distinguished himself in the fourth crusade, and had recently succeeded to the earldom of Leicester, by the decease of his mother, who was a native of England. The distance between the scene of this contest and his English possessions, and the limited nature of all feudal services, render it improbable that many of our ancestors were engaged in these ravages.³¹ But Montfort's deficiencies in this respect would be more than supplied by his military skill and reputation, and by a combination of qualities which fitted him to become conspicuous as the agent of intolerance. His object plainly was to annex the countship of Toulouse to his other possessions, and that, though it should be at the cost of its complete depopulation. With Leicester, indeed, and with the multitude, fanaticism no doubt conduced to this enterprise; but the sequel demonstrates that it arose in a much greater degree from the barbarian lust of plunder and devastation. Under the impulse of such motives, towns were taken in succession, and their inhabitants

³⁰ The monks of Citeaux were particularly active in recruiting for the enterprise; and to a soldiery immersed in superstition, and enslaved to every brutal passion, they announced that there was "no crime so dark, no vice so deeply rooted in the heart, the very trace of which a campaign of forty days in the south of France would not obliterate. Paradise, with all its glories, was opened for them, without the necessity of purchasing it by any

reformation in their conduct."—*Hist. Languedoc*, xxii. 84. Sismondi, ii. In 1214, Philip Augustus thought it expedient to abolish the exemption granted to these crusaders from the cognizance of the temporal courts, and also their privileges as accused of crimes, or in pleading for their fief or their manor.—*Ordonances des Rois*, i. 32.

³¹ Note B.

slaughtered with an atrocity which spared neither age nor sex. The local nobility had endeavoured to disarm the invaders by humiliation and entreaty,³² but it was the object of the pontiff to render the civil and the religious authorities of those heretical provinces entirely subject to his will, and the crusade in consequence advanced. The city of Beziers was first captured by the insurgents; and its inhabitants, amounting to many thousands, after a few hours were no more!³³ The siege of Circassone was a more costly undertaking to the assailants, but its intrepid defenders, and its harmless multitude, were also to be scattered or destroyed by the fanatics.³⁴ The fall of these

³² This was the case especially with Raymond of Toulouse, and Innocent judged it well to delay for a while the inflicting of his proposed vengeance on that injured man. It is thus the pontiff writes to his sacred emissaries: "We counsel you, with the apostle Paul, to employ guile with regard to this count, for in this case it ought to be called prudence. We must attack separately those who are separated from unity. Leave for a while the count of Toulouse, employing toward him a wise dissimulation, that the other heretics may be the more easily defeated, and that afterwards we may crush him when he shall be left alone." Thus did this arch villain secretly resolve on the destruction of a man to whom he had given his pledge of entire favour. Innocent, *Epist. i. lxi. ep. 232.* Sismondi, c. i. The spirit of Innocent pervaded his clerical agents. Peter, the monk of Vanx Cernay, was an attendant on the movements of Simon de Montfort, and while recording the most revolting atrocities as committed by that chieftain, extols him as the pattern of knighthood and devotion. In 1214, there was a prospect of Montfort's ravages being brought to a close; but a legate and another army of crusaders unexpectedly arrived—the truce was

perfidiously broken, and the consummate hypocrisy and fraud, displayed by the papal representative to supply the cross-bearers with the opportunities of indulging their lust of slaughter, are recorded by the same unprincipled monk with the most impassioned plaudits.

³³ The numbers of the slain have been variously determined by catholic writers from 10,000 to 60,000. The half of the latter number is the most probable amount, if it be true that the stated population of the city was 15,000; for if a remnant escaped, many who had fled to its walls for protection were doubtless numbered with the slain. The city was taken almost by surprise, and when it was inquired how in the work of slaughter the heretics should be distinguished from the faithful, the memorable answer of the Abbot of Citeaux was, "Kill them all, the Lord will know well those who are his."—Raynaldus *Eccles. 1209. Hist. de Languedoc, lib. xxii. c. lvii. 169. Bib. Cistercien. ii. 149.*

³⁴ The viscount of Beziers, whose crime had been that of forbearing to extirpate heresy in his dominions, trusted himself in the camp of the besiegers, relying for his safe conduct on

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principal towns was, of course, followed by that of the many castles, and the less promising retreats of this afflicted people. Nor was the system of outrage, commenced with this infuriated feeling, of short duration. Extending over the provinces of southern France, it was perpetuated for more than twenty years, exhibiting a combination and a continuance of crime, to which the annals of civilized heathenism could scarcely supply a parallel, and which is supposed to have swept away at least a million of lives.³⁵ A volume might be occupied in detailing these atrocities; but it must be sufficient to observe in the language of Mr. Gibbon, “that pope Innocent the third surpassed the sanguinary fame of Theodora. It was in cruelty alone that her soldiers could equal the heroes of the crusades; and the cruelties of her priests were far excelled by the founders of the inquisition, an office more adapted to confirm than to confute the belief of an evil principle.”³⁶

A. D. 1210—
1230

But the spoil of this enterprise failed to enrich its possessors. By their mutual envy, and by the extended disaffection which their conduct had created, more was lost than had been gained by oppression; while the sufferers, according to the narrative of their enemies, generally encountered their fate with a constancy not unworthy of the primitive martyrs. So unsparing, however, and so determined were the efforts of Simon de Montfort, of Arnold, abbot of Cîteaux, afterwards archbishop of

the oaths of its chiefs and the attendant clergy. Both himself and his followers were seized on the pretext that faith is not to be kept with heretics. The people of Circassone principally escaped the vengeance of their enemies, by means of a secret avenue connected with the city. Some, however, were seized, and together with the viscount and his knights, supplied to their enemies the festive spectacle

of 400 heretics consuming at the stake, and fifty suspended on the gallows!

³⁵ The author of the *Belgian Chronicle* from Cæsarius, (A. D. 1208,) describes the Albigenian doctrine as having infected a thousand cities, and as what must have corrupted all Europe had not its votaries been destroyed by the swords of the faithful.

³⁶ *Decline and Fall*, x. 186.

Narbonne, and of their numerous followers, to compete the work of extirpation, that there were seasons in which their malignant purpose seemed to be accomplished. The Albigenian teachers had perished, and apparently with scarcely an exception;³⁷ and the feeble remnant of their followers, who had escaped the vengeance of the crusaders, fled to distant countries, where a veil thrown over their previous history must commonly have afforded their only hope of security. In such regions, separated from their home, their pastors, their brethren, and from all the hallowed pleasures of social worship, their sorrows, even their sighs were required to be in secret! It is true, the sparks of the independence which had been thus subdued, were often perceptible amid the darkness which followed. In the two Sicilies, in Gascon, in Italy, even in Rome itself, the scattered sectaries were discovered; but their detection was every where the prelude to imprisonment, confiscation, and death.³⁸

The interval between the former half of the thirteenth century, with which these crusades are connected, and the middle of the following, in which Wycliffe appeared, is one of unusual gloom in the history of true religion.

³⁷ In proof of this we may remark, that the most diligent search of the vast army which entered the territories of the count of Toulouse, under the command of Louis the eighth, A. D. 1226, could discover but one person infected with the heresy, which, for the purpose of worldly policy, had been represented as requiring the strength of the French nation to remove it. That person was too aged either to fly or to alter his opinions, and he was burnt accordingly with much ceremony.—Hist. de Languedoc, ubi supra.

³⁸ Raynaldus, Ann. Eccles. A. D. 1231, sect. 18. 23. 13, 14. A. D. 1232, sect. S. A. D. 1233, sect. 12, A. D. 1234,

sect. 43. If we may credit Cardinal Conrad, who, in 1223, presided in the council of Sens, the Albigenes had recently established a pope, or chief pastor, on the frontier of Bulgaria, and were laboriously forming themselves into a rival hierarchy. (Labb. xi. 288. Matt. Paris, Hist. 267. Raynaldus, A. D. 1223, sect. 39.) It is not improbable that the shores of the Adriatic had afforded an asylum to the fugitive Albigenes; but the story of their pontiff is unworthy of notice. So late, however, as 1235, the Patarenes were frequently detected in the different states of Italy. (Ibid. sect. 15—19.) Nor were the Gallic provinces wholly freed from the pestilence. Labb. xi. 287.

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 The effort of the Waldenses and Albigeois to restore its purity, and which has not been improperly designated the first reformation, appeared as a total failure; and through nearly three hundred succeeding years, the good which it was designed to confer on the nations of the western empire is effectually resisted. And not only so, the machinery of despotism appears to have become every day more matured, and every struggle of its victims but to have placed them more completely beneath it. No doctrine opposed to the follies and the vices which the church had now canonized, could possibly circulate among the people, without being denounced at once as of heretical origin; nor without calling to remembrance the appalling convulsions by which its abettors had been crushed and destroyed. The wild fanaticism which taught the crusader to revere himself as the support of a falling church while shedding the blood of heretics, or leading them to the stake, had in some degree subsided;³⁹ but principally because the reputed foes of that church were no longer seen in formidable array. Hence the maxims of the stormy season which had passed were all retained, and were acted upon as often as men were found who dared to advocate the faith, the worship, or the morals, which had formed the glory of christian communities in better times. We may venture, indeed, to conclude, that the comparative indifference

³⁹ Of the contempt with which every thing Albigenian was regarded by the mass of the new inhabitants of Languedoc, whom the crusades had introduced, we may judge from the treatment experienced by Raymond the sixth, the count of Toulouse, and a most obsequious suppliant for the mercy of the priesthood. "They persecuted him," observes Sismondi, "for his compassion, not only during his life, but even for ages after his death. His son could never obtain the honours

of sepulture for his body; but his coffin was deposited near the burial ground of St. John of Toulouse, waiting the permission of the church for its interment. It was still there in the fourteenth century; but as it was only of wood, and as no one took care for its preservation, it was broken, and his bones dispersed before the sixteenth century. The skull alone of Raymond the sixth, was long preserved in the house of the hospitalers of St. John of Toulouse."

with which the few remaining dissenters from the hierarchy were now regarded, discovered a state of things even less hopeful than the former. During this period, we look in vain either to the clergy or the laity for the remotest idea of capacity, acquirement, or feeling, in any degree reputable, as associated with the crime of heresy.⁴⁰ Hence the persons convicted of that vague offence, were usually disposed of as if lost to every thing with which humanity might be expected to sympathize. So busily had the calumnies respecting them been circulated, and so general was the credence which had been given to them, that while frequently animated by sentiments the most devout and generous, they seemed to be viewed as distinguished from children but by the absence of their docility, and by a proficiency in the devices of impiety peculiar to themselves. In some instances their very punishment seems to have been foregone, from the notion of their being unworthy of the feeble effort which it demanded. Such, in the continental states, was the feeling of monarchs, of nobles, and of no small number among the clergy, through the century which preceded the appearance of Wycliffe. The struggle had passed, and the established superstition resumed its dominion with a renewed consciousness of power. How far the English reformer discovered the feeling of other states to be that of his countrymen, or how far the circumstances of England, in the fourteenth century, were particularly favourable to the formation of his character and the encouragement of his efforts, will appear from the following chapter, which is designed to present a rapid view of the institutions of our ancestors at that period.

⁴⁰ Reiner wrote about the middle of the thirteenth century, and we perceive something of this sentiment expressed by him, when he contrasts the preten-

sions of catholicism as supported by princes and literati, with those of heresy as sustained by "pauperes et opifici, mulieres et idiotæ." c. vii. 747.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENT, AND THE STATE OF SOCIETY IN ENGLAND, PREVIOUS TO THE AGE OF WYCLIFFE.

SECTION I.

DESPOTIC TENDENCIES OF THE PAPAL POWER.—FEEBLE OBLIGATIONS OF OUR SAXON ANCESTORS TO THE CHURCH OF ROME.—AUTHORITY OF THE ENGLISH MONARCHS WITH RESPECT TO THE ANGLICAN CHURCH FROM THE ACCESSION OF THE CONQUEROR.—EXCESSIVE AVARICE OF THE PAPACY.—ITS ENCROACHMENTS FREQUENTLY RESISTED BY THE PEOPLE AND THE NOBLES.—AND BY THE CLERGY.—NOTICE OF GROSSTESTE.—THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN HENRY THE SECOND AND THOMAS A BECKET.—VIGOROUS POLICY OF EDWARD THE FIRST.—LIMITS OF THE OPPOSITION HITHERTO MANIFESTED BY THE ENGLISH TO THE PAPAL CLAIMS.—THEIR IGNORANCE RESPECTING THE CHARACTER OF THE CONTINENTAL SECTARIES.—THE STORY OF GERARD AND HIS FOLLOWERS.—SINCERE DEVOTION SOMETIMES OBSERVABLE AMONG THE ENGLISH CLERGY OF THIS PERIOD—LANFRANC, ANSELM, ST. EDMUND,—BRADWARDINE.—RELIGIOUS DEGRADATION OF OUR ANCESTORS AT THE OPENING OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAP.
III.

Despotic
tendencies
of the papal
power.

THE abridgment of despotic authority in the crown, has been frequently numbered among the social benefits resulting from christianity as adopted in the states of modern Europe. History, however, has demonstrated, that the power thus wrested from the sovereign, was more frequently attached to the priesthood than conferred upon the people. Hence, the struggles which arose between monarchs and any considerable portion of their subjects, were partial and almost ineffective when compared with

those which were every where perpetuated between the demands of the crown and the pretensions of the mitre. The feudal system knew nothing of divine right as pertaining to kings any more than to their nobles, or to the more subordinate chieftains of the soil. But the ceremonies which had been connected by churchmen with the inauguration of monarchs, had served to create this distinction, and thus to produce the many forms of suffering which are inseparable from civil despotism. A character of peculiar sanctity was thus impressed on sovereigns, and such as was intended to place them above dependance on the subject, however elevated. Pontiffs, indeed, might dethrone princes, and give their land to strangers; but in every such transfer the people were disposed of along with the territory, and were left to resist the pontifical decision but at the peril of their souls. Amid every conceivable revolution, therefore, the only alternative before the view of the multitude, was this change of tyrannies. While the docility of the monarch secured the approbation of the pope, every terror of superstition was freely employed to enforce the royal pleasure; but a dispute between the king and this chief pastor of the church formed a favourable crisis for revolt. Even then, however, the man who should be raised by some convulsion to the throne, would not fail to be reminded by the spiritual counsellor of Christendom of the fate of his predecessor, and would be gravely admonished on the importance of profiting by example.¹

¹ The history of our Magna Charta affords a sufficient proof of the above statements, and its fate, as a document favourable to popular rights, was not singular. Matthew Paris records the wrath of Innocent the third respecting it, as degrading to his vassal, the king of England; and informs us, that it was annulled by the pope and his conclave.

(Hist. 266.) The pontiff afterwards descended to reason with the barons on the propriety of relinquishing their ill-gotten treasure; promising, that their submission to his will as lord, should not be to their injury: but both his authority and his condescension were lost on the efficient parties in the affair of Runnede, (ibid. 267.)

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Feeble obligations of our Saxon ancestors to the church of Rome.
A. D. 600—700.

In England, various circumstances had facilitated the early subjection of the ecclesiastical establishment to the authority of Rome. The doctrine of christianity was introduced among our Saxon ancestors by papal missionaries; and these, though slow in their progress, at length procured the expulsion of the Scottish clergy from that larger portion of the octarchy which their more successful zeal had evangelized. These events, together with the subsequent appointment of Theodore to the see of Canterbury, by pope Vitalian; the rapid diffusion of the monastic spirit; and the frequent appeals of Wilfred of York to the papal tribunal; contributed much to induce that spirit of subjection to a foreign interference so observable in the history of the Anglo-Saxon church.² It is, however, worthy of remark, that when the duke of Normandy meditated his enterprise to secure the sceptre of Anglo-Saxon Britain, this obedience of the fathers availed nothing with the successor of St. Peter in behalf of the children. A consecrated banner was the significant present of Alexander the third to the invader of England; and by William and his army it was hailed as expressing a sanction of their object from the head of the church.³

A. D. 1066.

Authority of the English monarchs with respect to the Anglican church from the accession of the conqueror.

But the triumphs of the Norman leader were unfriendly to the progress of papal influence. In the country which his arms had subdued, his will became supreme. The most distinguished officers of the church were removed at his pleasure, and their places were supplied by his followers. The decrees of synods, and all the more important censures of the clergy, were also made to depend upon his

Honorius, who succeeded Innocent, approved of his policy in this particular, but suggested to Henry, the importance of choosing a favourable crisis for recovering that portion of authority which had been improperly wrested from his hand, (*ibid.* 268.) Clement the fifth proceeded so far as

to absolve our Edward the first from all the restraints which this obnoxious paper had imposed upon him, and from whatever oaths he might have taken to observe its provisions.—Collier, i. 499.

² See Note C.

³ Malm. 56.

sanction.⁴ And if it was among the last acts of his life to secure certain lands of the church to the purposes for which they were bequeathed, William was the first among our princes to exact from such domains the various aids of civil tenure, or of knight-service.⁵ During the schism in the papacy, the conqueror also assumed the right of determining in behalf of the English church, respecting the person to be acknowledged as her spiritual superior; and while papal legates were allowed to preside in the national councils, it is evident that these formalities were always conducted in entire subserviency to the will of the sovereign.⁶ By his authority the intercourse between the English prelates and the see of Rome was cautiously regulated; nor did the menace of Hildebrand as provoked by this policy at all affect its continuance.⁷ The claim of the tribute, known by the name of Peter's pence, was more successfully made; but that of homage to the see of St. Peter for the crown of England, was spurned with a decision, which the most aspiring of the pontiffs judged it important to respect.⁸ It was, however, in the introduction of the "court christian," that the policy of William, in relation to the church, became to his new subjects most remarkable. Among the Anglo-Saxon people, the clergy and the magistrate had occupied the same bench, and with some trivial exceptions had been accustomed to determine the same causes. But the decision of such matters as were considered to be wholly civil was now reserved to the separate jurisdiction of the secular tribunal; while to the clergy in their spiritual courts pertained the judgment of offences as charged upon the persons of their own order, and that of the various

SECT.
I.

⁴ Eadmer, 6.

⁵ Ibid. Matt. Paris, 7.

⁶ Eadmer, 6.

⁷ Collier, i. 252.

⁸ Selden Spicil. ad. Eadmer, 164.—

The words of the conqueror were, "To pay homage I have been unwilling, and I am unwilling, for neither did I promise it, nor do I find that my predecessors paid it to your's."

CHAP. delinquencies which came within the cognizance of the
 III. ecclesiastical canons.⁹ The limits of these separate judi-
 catures, if they were ever accurately defined, were never
 carefully observed; hence, their history through the
 western empire had been that of dissension; and if the
 conqueror knew but little of the evils which commonly
 arose from their collisions, his felicity in this respect was
 less the result of his unusual capacity than of his favour-
 able circumstances.

A. D. 1100. The government of William Rufus, in reference to the
 church, was distinguished from that of his father in nothing
 excepting his more lawless inroads on ecclesiastical prop-
 erty.¹⁰ Henry the first, who ascended the throne to the
 exclusion of Robert, his elder brother, was aware of the
 hazards to which a defective title exposed his crown, and
 endeavoured to secure the attachment of his people by
 the liberality of his measures and professions. In his
 case, however, it was considered sufficient to promise with
 respect to the church, that her former immunities should be
 preserved, and that his exchequer should not be illegally
 enriched from her revenue, as in the preceding reign.¹¹
 Anselm, who filled the see of Canterbury, seized a favour-
 able crisis to demand of the king his surrender of the right
 of investitures. Henry first evaded, and at length openly

⁹ Eadmer, 6. Wilkins. i. 368.—To evade the evil of this arrangement, so fruitful of perplexity to his successors, William was obliged on one occasion to tax his ingenuity. His brother, Odo, while holding the bishopric of Baieux, was created earl of Kent; and when about to quit the kingdom in the hope of succeeding to the papacy, it occurred to the conqueror that the departure of the nobles in his brother's retinue and of their united treasure from the kingdom, was an evil that should be prevented. Odo was accordingly arrested under

pretence of mismanagement in his civil office during a recent absence of his sovereign in Normandy. The prelate complained of his arrest and appealed to the clerical tribunal, but the king replied, that he was detained not as bishop of Baieux, but as earl of Kent.

¹⁰ It is the statement of the faithful Eadmer, that his sovereign regarded the papal influence in England as dependant in all things on the will of the prince. i. 28, ii. 54.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, iii. 55.

and effectively resisted this novel claim.¹² A similar fate also awaited the attempts which were made during the same period to vest the legates of the papal see with an authority in the nation, independent of the crown.¹³ During the commotions which extended through the reign of Stephen, the brother of the sovereign exercised the legatine authority in the English church; and the clergy, alternately flattered or oppressed, were left in the rank assigned to them under the government of the first William and his sons. But in the reign of Stephen's successor, the comparative strength of the civil and ecclesiastical powers of England, was to be determined by a series of events, which attracted the notice, and involved some of the most important interests of Christendom. The contest, however, which embittered the reign of Henry the second, was not so much with the pontiff as with the more aspiring among the clergy of every nation; a class of men whose general temper was but too faithfully reflected in that of their advocate, Thomas à Becket. The reign of Richard the first affords but few materials to the ecclesiastical historian. It is certain, however, that the most intrepid of our monarchs was careful to exercise that authority with respect to the church, for which his father had contended; and that the English clergy in his day, deemed it expedient rather to question the measures of the pope than those of the king. But the reign of his successor was to exhibit the complete ascendancy of priestly ambition. John claimed as his right, the nomination of persons to

SECT.
I.

A. D. 1134.

A. D. 1154.

A. D. 1189.

A. D. 1199.

¹² Eadmer, iii. 57—91. The king, indeed, consented to relinquish the practice of conferring the ring and crosier; but they were surrendered, considered only as the emblem of spiritual jurisdiction. The loss of the sovereign therefore was merely that of a ceremony.

¹³ Eadmer contends, though with

more patriotism than truth, that such authority had never been known in England, except as connected with the see of Canterbury, (vi. 58.) Such, however, was the disposal of the office under Henry the first. (*Anglia Sacra*, i. 792.) The admission of the power in any form involved a degree of subjection to a foreign authority.

CHAP.
III.

the vacant bishoprics. This demand the monks of Canterbury opposed with vigour; treating it as an encroachment on the ancient authority of their convent. In support of their pretensions they appealed to the tribunal of the pope; and through their chicanery, the king became involved in his disastrous conflict with the see of Rome. The claim of the English monarch had been sanctioned by the practice of all his predecessors; but his violent and uncertain temper exposed his kingdom to the sentence of an interdict, and his person to that of excommunication. Still unmoved, he was next declared by the sovereign pontiff to be no longer king; his subjects were absolved from their allegiance; and all christian princes were exhorted to aid in wresting the sovereignty of England and Ireland from the grasp of a perjured man. Philip of France obeyed the summons, and collecting the strength of his kingdom, prepared to seize the English sceptre as his own. John surveyed the forces of the enemy, reflected on the general disaffection which his many vices had created, and at length complied with the demand of a papal legate, who exacted as the price of protection from domestic treachery, and from foreign invasion, that the deserted monarch should restore to the church every former emolument and privilege, and that resigning his kingdom into the hands of the pontiff, he should consent to hold it for ever, as a fief of the holy see. As a badge of this odious servitude, a thousand marks was to be annually conveyed to the treasury of St. Peter.¹⁴

A. D. 1216.

Excessive
avarice of
the papacy.

The political influence of the papacy, with respect to this country, could receive no farther augmentation; and from this period, the ingenuity of the vatican appears to have been vigorously applied, to render the subjection

¹⁴ Matthew Paris was contemporary with these events, and describes the papal legate as reiterating the doctrine

of Hildebrand in the presence of the king, 229—337.

of England to the feudal and the spiritual supremacy of the pontiffs as productive as possible. This subjection of the love of power to the baser passion of avarice, became obvious from about this period in the general policy of Rome. The modesty, which had once limited the pontifical interference in episcopal elections to instances of succession in the archiepiscopal sees, we have seen followed by a similar intrusion, with reference to the suffragan prelaties; and admitted into these more ambitious departments of the hierarchy, the spirit of encroachment was with less difficulty extended to all the subordinate sources of emolument and power.¹⁵ We have seen, also, that this invasion of the rights of patronage, affecting alike the prince and the subject, was not peculiar to England. It was an innovation which would of course be variously resisted. But the political divisions of Christendom were opposed to any general effort, even for the removal of evils generally felt; and by the skill of the pontiffs they were commonly so fostered or controlled, that to each state the alliance of a power, enthroned amid the superstitions of the age, was always important. That division of strength also, which national rivalry, or the policy of the Roman court failed to produce, was too frequently effected by domestic faction and intrigue.¹⁶

SECT.
I.

¹⁵ It was not until the year 1257, that the abbots of this kingdom were obliged to follow the example of its prelates and to visit Rome, before assuming the exercise of their new functions. We have observed that Matthew Paris complained of this innovation. He saw it as bringing into the monasteries the same disputes respecting elections which had become hereditary in the chapters; and he further saw that the absence of the abbot elect, would often be a season in which monastic wealth would be invaded by the laity, and when monastic

discipline might not be so rigorously observed, Hist. 951.

¹⁶ Boniface VIII. who would have treated Philip the fair as his vassal, and have drained the Gallican church of her treasures, was somewhat more cautious in his demeanour toward the English hierarchy. It was in the year 1302, that a bishop of Worcester cited the authority of a papal bull which affected to give him possession of the temporalities of that see; but his disloyalty was followed by the fine of a thousand marks, and by an acknowledgment before the king and his

CHAP.
III.

An exclusive patronage, of such ecclesiastical vacancies as were of royal foundation, was among the disputed claims of Henry the second. It formed a branch of authority cautiously preserved by Richard, his son and successor; and we have seen that John, to whom the sceptre next descended, became violent in asserting the same pretension. But his subsequent surrender of this right, together with his crown, into the hands of the pope, exposed the nation, during the succeeding reign, to a system of exaction the most oppressive in its annals. The sums extorted by the court of Rome under the name of "fees," had incurred the reproach of Christendom. To this odium the pontiff adverts, as inducing him to request of Henry the third, that two prebends in each cathedral, with an annual sum equal to the support of two monks for every monastery, might be transferred to the papal court, in commutation of those acknowledgments which ancient custom had rendered to its equity, but which had recently become so much the matter of complaint. It was at once perceived that the commutation proposed would be such in name only, and described as a novelty, it was successfully evaded by Henry and his barons.¹⁷

In some subsequent attempts to drain the land of its wealth, England's pontifical lord was more fortunate. Many necessities were successively pleaded, as justifying his pecuniary demands; such as the recovery of the holy land from the profanation of the infidel; the expenses of a war conducted against the emperor, who, by defending his right of investitures, had become no less a foe to the church; and above all, the importance of an ample revenue, that the secular dignity of the papal court might be maintained—a dignity described as essential to its

council, that those appendages to his office were holden solely of the king, nor did the pontiff consider it wise to

remonstrate.—Spelman, ii. 435.

¹⁷ Spelman, ii. 328—331.

influence, and in consequence to the perpetuity of the true religion, and the means of salvation to the world. To place the property of the English nation under regular contribution for these and similar purposes, it became necessary to ascertain its extent, and with a view to this object the most offensive measures were adopted.¹⁸ In the year 1229, a tenth of the moveables of England was demanded, and obtained, to aid the successor of St. Peter in a war which was intended to reduce the temporal power of the empire into complete subjugation to the spiritual. By the legate Rubee, some few years later, a fifth was required for the same purpose from the revenues of the clergy; while the transfer of benefices in the English church to Italian clerks, had become such as to occasion loud complaints and even open violence.¹⁹ The expenditure of ecclesiastical property on this class of foreigners, as ascertained by Grossteste, was not less than 70,000 marks a year, a revenue stated by another contemporary writer, as exceeding that of the crown by two-thirds.²⁰ Nor was it deemed sufficient thus to condemn the ancient laws of patronage. In this, as in other countries, benefices were extensively conferred on the favourites of the papacy, by way of provision and commendam. By the custom of provisors, ecclesiastics were considered as persons provided for certain livings in prospect of the next vacancy; by that of commendam they were introduced avowedly but to occupy the vacancy until a permanent incumbent might be regularly chosen. The latter arrangement soon became as objectionable as the former, inasmuch as the period of occupancy was frequently

SECT.
I.

¹⁸ Spelman, 361. If the contribution levied on the ascertained property of the subject was refused, the parties were to be excommunicated, and their estates laid under an interdict.

¹⁹ Collier, i. 431.

²⁰ Matt. Paris, 859. In bringing the English church to this state, the zeal of the reigning pontiff, Innocent the fourth, is said to have been more effective than that of all his predecessors.

CHAP. commensurate with the life of the parties so appointed.
 III.

By such measures, the intercourse between the papacy and the English church, every where assumed the character of a most impious merchandise. From these frequent and sudden demands for money, arose the class of persons described by our historians as Italian bankers;—wealthy men who, profiting by the necessities of others, had contrived to extend their influence to every department of the ecclesiastical system. Roger, bishop of London, censured their iniquitous policy; but they converted his official displeasure into merriment. He next pronounced them excommunicated, and insisted on their removal to a distance from the city; but they appealed from his decision to that of the pope, aware that their opponent would hardly submit to the parent of the evil as a judge.²¹

A. D. 1272
 —1327.

The abuses of this description which prevailed through the reign of the first Edward, and that of his son, were scarcely less than those which had disgraced the age of Henry the third. A tenth, from the almost exhausted revenues of the English clergy, was annually conveyed to the treasury of the pope, through six successive years from the accession of the first of these princes.²² On one occasion Edward descended to become himself the collector of this odious tribute; but the pontiff suspecting the motives of this voluntary labour, demanded that the business should devolve upon its proper agents, and the king considered it important to withhold his services.²³ From the records of a parliament convened the year of Edward's decease, it appears that every source of wealth under the control of the popes in the preceding reign

²¹ Matt. Paris, 419. The name Caur-sini, by which these thrifty merchants were distinguished, bespoke their origin.

²² Knighton de Eventibus, 2461.

²³ The pope complained most loudly of this intrusion, threatening, should

it be continued, to visit the person and dominions of the monarch with chastisements proportioned "to the sin thus committed against the Divine Majesty, and the contempt thus shewn for the apostolic see."—Collier, i. 484.

was still retained by them. Their agents also are farther accused of putting fraudulent interpretations on wills, to increase their spoil; of assuming the authority of civil magistrates, to effect the recovery of debts; and of greatly exceeding their commission in collecting the ancient tribute of Peter's pence. It was also stated, that the property of religious houses had been largely conveyed into the hands of foreigners; either in obedience to claims preferred by the heads of their respective orders, or to those advanced by popes in favour of their cardinals; while the demand of the pontiff's on the first fruits, i. e. the first year's revenue from every vacant benefice, was described as a novelty, and as highly prejudicial to the interests of the king, the church, and the nation. Thus England descended to the feeble government of Edward the second, burdened with ecclesiastical grievance; and as the inquietude which was commensurate with the reign of that monarch was incompatible even with the effort for redress—the thralldom which superstition had imposed on the nation, appeared unbroken on the accession of the sovereign, under whose auspices John de Wycliffe became known as a reformer.

But the monarch was not the only, nor even the principal opponent of papal avarice and encroachment. The disgrace which the weakness and the vices of John had brought upon the nation, could hardly be viewed by his successors without a blush; the shame, however, appears to have been more deeply felt by the aristocracy and the people than by the sovereign. It was during the last year in the reign of that prince, that an interdict was pronounced in the name of the pontiff, on the city of London, as the chastisement of rebellion. But the citizens are described, as distinguishing very accurately between the temporal and the spiritual power of the popes, and as treating the sentence of the church with contempt,

SECT.
I.

Its encroachments frequently resisted by the people,

CHAP. because published under false impressions, and designed to
 III. enforce a secular claim. "The pope," they observe, "has

no authority for concerning himself in worldly matters, inasmuch as it was simply a spiritual jurisdiction which the Saviour conveyed to St. Peter and his successors. Whence is this ambition of Rome extending itself even to our island? What have these apostolic prelates to do with the direction of armies? Surely their claim is derived from Constantine, and not from St. Peter. Little,

A. D. 1209. indeed, of the apostle is there in themselves or their deeds; but while better versed in the arts of ambition and extortion than in those of war and peace, they must strive by their spiritual authority to render themselves absolute, and ever scattering their anathemas must aspire to the subjection of the world."²⁴ These sentiments cannot fail to remind the reader of Arnold of Brescia; and thus stimulated, the Londoners rang the bells of the city throughout the day on which the interdict was announced, banishing from their walls all the signs of contrition usual at such seasons.

by the nobility,

The feeling thus evinced by the inhabitants of the metropolis, was also frequently expressed by the more opulent members of the community, and especially by the barons. It was this which induced the latter, in an assembly of 1229, indignantly to refuse a pecuniary grant which had been solicited by Gregory the ninth.²⁵ From the same causes, and a few years later, an association was secretly formed with a view to correct by violence, certain ecclesiastical abuses which were found to defy the penalties of law. Governed by individuals of rank, its object was to render the benefices of the English church less attractive to the creatures of the papacy; and this was attempted by menacing the Italian clergy with a total destruction of their property; and by carrying their threats

²⁴ Matt. Paris, 278.

²⁵ Ibid. 361.

into fearless execution with respect to some of the more delinquent in that class of strangers.²⁶ Indeed, during the reign of Henry the third, and Edward the first, the nobility and the commons frequently discovered a spirit of opposition to this system of foreign control, which must have led to important results, had it not been continually impeded by the feebleness of the one monarch, and by the mistaken policy of the other. Had Edward disclosed but half the energy of character in the cause of religious independence within his own dominions, which was evident in his protracted effort to subject the crown of Scotland to that of England, his name might have occupied a most enviable prominence in the annals of his country. But immediate aggrandizement was the object generally before him; and he may have judged correctly in supposing that this would be best promoted by preserving an amicable intercourse with the papal court.²⁷

SECT.
I.

Nor were the laity always alone in presenting this resistance to oppression. These complaints of the sovereign, and these louder remonstrances of the people were followed in various instances by similar expostulations from the clergy. The doctrines of Arnold, as proclaimed by the citizens of London in 1209, had been previously advocated by a favourite churchman, in the presence of the king; and if the subsequent surrender of the crown to the pontiff, was followed by measures which reduced the revolutionary teacher to a state of exile and poverty, his

and by the
clergy.

²⁶ Collier, i. 434.

²⁷ It was not long before his death that he was absolved by the pontiff from his oaths to observe the provisions of magna charta; and in a subsequent parliament some important regulations were adopted to prevent the shameless impositions of the papal court; but the king, in contempt of his promise to act with the lords and commons, secretly encouraged the grievance, and

it continued to his death. (Collier, 500—503.) Among the last acts of his life was his presenting a service of plate to supply the table of the pontiff, and his surrender of the revenues of Canterbury, into the hands of the pope on the degradation of Winchelsea. These, however, are trifles compared with the bad faith of the former deed. —Ibid.

CHAP. III. opinions, it is certain, were not wholly forgotten.²⁸ We find the name of one English clergyman only attached to the deed which was designed to render this country a fief of the papacy.²⁹ An archbishop also, the principal agent in obtaining magna charta, was the first in the order of nobility to denounce that odious compact as invalid, and as a national reproach.³⁰ By an assembly of prelates and abbots, the first demand on the wealth of the hierarchy under the third Henry, was successfully resisted.³¹ A claim was afterwards preferred on a tenth of the moveables of the church by pope Gregory; but the justice of the papal pretension was debated through several days, and the compliance so reluctantly yielded, was accompanied by a protest against the converting of a voluntary offering into a precedent for future usurpation.³² This prudent admonition, however, was little regarded. In 1238, a fifth of the clerical revenues was demanded towards defraying the expences of a war directed by the pope against the emperor. The English prelates reminded the pontiff of the caution which they had connected with their former grant: they also ventured to describe the hostilities which they were required to support as founded in injustice; and complained in yet stronger language of the tyranny disclosed in the menace of excommunication, as the penalty to be incurred by such of their order as should oppose this pecuniary claim. For these reasons and others, they inform the representative of the chief pastor, that his present appeal to their worldly resources must be wholly in vain. Thus repulsed by the prelates, the legate next assailed the inferior clergy. But the ecclesiastics of Berkshire spoke the sentiments which had become considerably prevalent with their order, when

²⁸ Westminster Ann. 1209. Matt. Paris, 229.

²⁹ Ibid. 337.

³⁰ Ibid. 370, 371.

³¹ Ibid. 331.

³² Ibid. 361.

they described the emperor as not to be convicted of heresy, except by the judgment of the church; and the persecution of heretics by military force, as a custom unknown in the earlier ages of Christianity. The power of the pope, with respect to ecclesiastical property, they also stated, as the parallel of that possessed by the sovereign with respect to the estates of the subject; contending as a consequence, that the restrictions imposed on the prerogative of kings were in equal justice to be placed on that of pontiffs.³³ In 1245, a stand no less vigorous and united, was made by the same class of men, in connection with the nobles and the commons; and its failure, as a noble effort to protect the independence and the property of the kingdom, is attributed to the pusillanimity of the king.³⁴

But in adverting to the opposition of the English clergy to the rapacity of their ecclesiastical sovereign, the name of Grossteste deserves a particular notice. It was in the year 1253, that a mandate was addressed by Innocent the fourth to that prelate, who then filled the see of Lincoln, requiring him to induct an Italian boy to a vacancy in his diocese. This venerable ecclesiastic, whose learning and sanctity had won the applause of his countrymen, shrunk with indignation from the odious service. In a letter to the papal court, after the usual professions of reverence, he declares with freedom his resolve to follow its decisions only as they might be found to accord with the doctrine of Christ, and with that of his apostles. He complains of the clause *non obstante*, usually inserted in the papal bulls, as an example of duplicity which, were it generally imitated, must be fatal to all religious faith, and subversive of all social order. The practice of conferring cures on parties incompetent to the duties of the pastoral office, he numbers with the most perilous of heresies; and, attributing the greater guilt of the custom to the higher

Notice of
Grossteste.

³³ Matt. Paris, 532—535.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 694—708. *Annal. Burton.* 306.

CHAP.
III.

authorities, who were daily sanctioning its principle—he ventures to assert that the remotest encouragement given to such measures at Rome must be to convert the chair of St. Peter into the chair of pestilence, and to render his holiness but one with Antichrist and Satan. Innocent, on reading this novel document, discovered the spirit which has commonly proved the associate of his office. He spoke of the king of England as his vassal; and threatened to hurl upon the head of this “absurd old man” a punishment, which should make him the wonder of his kind. But in the more wary suggestions of his cardinals we perceive the caution induced by the less passive state of society. It was observed, that the reputation of the bishop of Lincoln yielded not to that of any prelate in Christendom; that the evils of which he complained could not be said to be imaginary; and that his complaint was farther supported by facts and reasonings, which must render any hostile movement with regard to him a matter of doubtful policy. These prudent admonitions at length prevailed. But Grossteste became still more the enemy of the corruption which he had exposed; and had the zeal of his youth been as enlightened as that of his old age, he might have been enrolled among the most distinguished benefactors of his country. On his death-bed he is said to have denounced the pope as a heretic and antichrist; and the popularity of his name gave currency to a tale of his re-appearance, as a nightly vision, to shake the heart of the pontiff by an announcement of his guilt.³⁵

A. D. 1272. On the accession of Edward the first, the spirit of the clergy was still favourable to an abridgment of the papal influence, particularly as affecting their property and the ancient discipline of the English church. So long as the intercourse of the king with the court of Rome

³⁵ Matt. Paris, 870, 883. Annal. Burton, 326, 328.

contributed to the protection of their wealth, they were the wary but certain partisans of the crown. When, however, the necessities of that crown exposed them to the same species of exaction from another quarter, they threw themselves again under the despotism of the papacy; and it will be sufficient here to remark, that during the two centuries preceding the reformation, the English ecclesiastics appear to have been more jealous of their domestic than of their foreign superior.³⁵

The purpose for which we advert to these instances of opposition to the usurpations of the pontiffs, will require the same passing notice of the struggles so long perpetuated in the bosom of the nation between the monarch and the clergy. We have seen that the separation of the civil from the ecclesiastical power in the annals of this country, is to be attributed to the policy of the Conqueror; nor is it until the reign of Henry the second, that the evils of that measure appear to have been of serious magnitude. With the monarch last named, political influence was an object often pursued with an ardour incompatible with a just discrimination as to the best means of securing it. To attach the clergy to his person, Henry became the first among our princes to stain his hand in the blood of persecution:³⁷ to annex the provinces of Ireland to his extensive possessions, he descended to solicit them as a grant from the pope:³⁸ and to facilitate the subjection of ecclesiastical persons, in all criminal cases, to the judgment of a lay tribunal, was his principal motive in appointing the most luxurious churchman of the age to the vacant see of Canterbury. But Henry was destined to suffer much from that clerical resentment which his imprudence had fostered; he also

SECT.
I

The controversy between Henry the second and Thomas à Becket.

A.D. 1154.

³⁵ Of this statement the second volume of Wilkins would afford ample illustration. The reader may consult, as a specimen, pp. 226—233.

³⁷ William of Newberry, ii. 13. Spelman, ii. 59.

³⁸ Baronius, Ann. 1154, 1155.

CHAP.
III.

lived to regret the concession made by his conduct in favour of the most obnoxious pretension of the papacy: and in the person of Thomas à Becket, the royal favourite, and the new metropolitan, he presently discovered the determined opponent of his measures with regard to the English church. This extraordinary man had rapidly passed through various civil and ecclesiastical offices to the rank of chancellor.³⁹ Vested with the prelacy of England, he became immediately distinguished as the champion of that political independence in the christian priesthood which he had previously aided the monarch to invade, and which he knew to be regarded by Henry as a most pernicious encroachment on his rights as a sovereign.⁴⁰ But a new theatre was now opened to Becket's ambition; and he prepared himself for the approaching conflict by a flattering appeal to the superstitions of the age. Relinquishing an opulence of retinue which had excited the wonder of his own, and of other countries,⁴¹ he claimed the applause of a religious conversion, by suddenly resorting to practices which were to the last degree ascetic, but which, to his discerning eye, must have borne the aspect of childishness.⁴²

³⁹ While archdeacon of Canterbury, Becket had accompanied his sovereign in the war of Toulouse. He there took three castles which were deemed impregnable, tilted triumphantly with an accomplished knight of France, and afterwards traversed Normandy at the head of 1200 knights and 4000 cavalry, maintained at his own charge. Yet such was the christianity of the times, that this military adventurer was already anticipated as the primate of the English church.—Stephan. 22, 23.

⁴⁰ The chancellor, with whom Henry had long indulged the most intimate familiarity, could not possibly have been ignorant of his master's sentiments and designs, and if he hinted at probable

disagreement as a consequence of his elevation, it was done with a smile, and was only adapted to provoke one.—Quadril. l. i. c. 11.

⁴¹ Stephan. 20, 21. Littleton, iii. 24.

⁴² "The roughest sackcloth, overrun with vermin, was his chosen garment, his food was the diet of mortification, his drink was water in which fennel had been purposely boiled, to make it nauseous. He frequently exposed his naked back to stripes." (Turner, i. 241.) This statement, which is that of Fitzstephen, (24, 25,) the biographer and admirer of Becket, is softened down, and almost denied, in the notices which are given us respecting this clerical hero by modern catholics. Mr. Ber-

It is evident, at the same time, that this unexpected policy of the archbishop served only to confirm the previous purpose of the king.

SECT.
I.

The practice of ordaining clerks, though destitute of cures, had increased the number of the clergy beyond the demands of the country; and, together with their entire exemption from civil jurisdiction, had so far contributed to their degeneracy, that a more felonious class of men was scarcely known in the nation at this period than were the accredited teachers of its faith.⁴³ In the well-known constitutions of Clarendon, Henry demanded that in civil or criminal suits, where either party was a clergyman, it should rest with the king's justices to determine whether the cause pertained to the secular or the spiritual court; and that ecclesiastics convicted of criminal action before either tribunal, should suffer the penalty annexed to such offences irrespective of their order. It must be conceded, that this demand, with others relating to the same controversy, but of less moment, was rather in the spirit of Anglo-Saxon than of Anglo-Norman jurisprudence. The remaining articles, however, might, with less impropriety, be termed

rington shrinks with horror from the guilt of suppressing evidence, but these details are an important species of evidence, as in such a man they must have proceeded from *fraud or insanity*. (Hen. ii. 650.) Dr. Lingard could hardly fail to manage these things better, but it is not from his narrative that the real character of Becket may be known.

⁴³ William of Newberry, a contemporary, informs us that the king had been assured by his judges, that public order was frequently broken by "the thefts, rapines, and homicides," of clergymen, who, pleading their privilege as clerks, eluded all penalty. The same historian states, that it had been affirmed in his hearing, that above a hundred homicides had been committed by that class of men since the accession of the

present monarch. It is plain that the historian considered this report to be true; and when it is remembered that the reign of Henry had not yet extended to ten years, we are not surprised that a concern for public justice should be conceded by this writer as the principal motive of his sovereign in sustaining the conflict which ensued; nor that he should censure his brethren as more solicitous to preserve "the liberties and rank of their order, than to remove its delinquencies." (ii. c. 16.) The vices of no few among the clergy, must have been of the most shameless description, to have extorted from Becket's admirers, and at such a season, the appellation of "the devil's workman," and "tousured demons." Herib. c. 22. Turner, i. 246.

CHAP. the "customs" of the realm. In these it was enacted, that
 III.
 the revenues of vacant bishoprics, and abbeys, and priories, should belong to the national exchequer; and that the appointment of every new incumbent should originate with the king's writ, and be confirmed by the principal clergy assembled in the royal chapel; that the sentence of excommunication, or interdict, should be pronounced on the person or property of a tenant in chief of the king, or upon an officer of his household, or demesne, but with the royal assent; and that appeals from the metropolitan court should be made to that of the monarch, and be extended beyond the national authority but by permission from the sovereign.⁴⁴

Becket, who had twice pledged himself to the observance of these customs, repented of his conduct; and pleading the circumstances which had induced his reluctant compliance, obtained absolution from the pontiff. To escape the resentment of the king he fled to the continent, and sheltered by Henry's political rival, Louis of France, and by the whole strength of the papal power, the archbishop was enabled to perpetuate a disastrous struggle with his prince.⁴⁵ After nearly six years had been thus employed, the primate returned, by royal permission, to Canterbury. His arrival, however, was announced by the thunders of excommunication directed against various prelates and

⁴⁴ Matt. Paris, 100. Wilkins, 321, 324. This memorable dispute commenced by Henry's demanding that a clergyman of Worcester, who had violated the person of a female, and murdered her father, should be left to the judgment of a lay tribunal. Becket descended to shelter the licentious homicide, by pleading his exemption as a christian priest from all lay authority, and delivered him to the custody of a bishop. Stephan. 33. It should be remarked also, that, previous to this

event, the primate had probably displeased his sovereign by the tone of authority with which he had resumed an almost forgotten claim on certain lands, said to have belonged to the see of Canterbury.—Quadril. l. i. c. 25, 26.

⁴⁵ The part performed by Becket in this controversy is narrated with no little admiration by the most popular catholic writers. Are we to understand by this that they are the maxims of Becket which these gentlemen would see ascendant among us?

noblemen, the known adherents of the king.⁴⁶ It was now impossible to conceal that Becket had determined to admit of no superior in the English nation.⁴⁷ All hope of tranquillity fled; and to secure the state from this projected domination of the church, it was secretly resolved, by certain attendants on the king, to accomplish by violence what had been long solicited in vain from the vaunted equity of law.⁴⁸ Bound by an oath, which an irritation by no means disreputable appears to have suggested, the parties reached Canterbury, and finding the primate still inflexible, the deed of blood was performed. It was an act which no circumstances could justify. But Becket died as he lived, proud, intrepid, and obstinate; adding,

⁴⁶ It should be noticed that the struggle in which the archbishop was engaged, was one in which he appears to have stood deserted by the body of the English clergy from the commencement. This may have proceeded from policy or principle. Their address, which he received during his exile, from its admonitory character and its deference to the claims of the king, must have been any thing but agreeable to him.—*Epist. c. i. Ep. 126.*

⁴⁷ "Some think," observes his friend, the bishop of Lisieux, "that your struggle does not proceed from virtue but from pride. That still the chancellor in spirit, you are striving that none should resist your will. That you wish to raise a power independent of the king's will. That you so hang over the diadem itself as to seek to make it subordinate to the church, and that you hope if royalty should fail in the contest, none else will presume to oppose you."—*L. i. ep. 85. Turner, i. 262.* Every suspicion of this kind must have been strengthened by his conduct on revisiting his see. Among the prelates who were then excommunicated by him, was the celebrated John of Salisbury. That ecclesiastic had not risen, perhaps,

in the esteem of his metropolitan, by suggesting to him in his exile, that the study of the canon law was less connected with devotional improvement than that of the gospels or the psalms. (*c. i. ep. 31.*) Dr. Lingard states that the archbishop had determined to suppress the excommunication of the prelates, but that his purpose was altered on learning that a guard of soldiers was sent to seize his person and deprive him of the document before he should land. (*ii. 338.*) The reverse, however, would seem manifest, from his known solicitude before leaving the continent to become possessed of the powers which, as "fetters," might "bind and repress" his enemies. (*Turner, i. 270.*) Their application, we may suppose, was to be in some measure conditional.

⁴⁸ The king uttered some passionate language, which is variously reported; but which, it is probable, amounted to a regret that no hand could free him from the insults of this turbulent antagonist. His attendants put their own interpretation on his expressions. Their place of meeting was near the house of Ranulf and Robert de Broc, gentlemen on whom the archbishop had pronounced his recent anathema.—*Σtephan. 77.*

CHAP. perhaps, towards the close of life, something of sincere
III. fanaticism to the previous elements of his character.⁴⁹
His death speedily secured him the honours of a saint and a martyr; while over the head of Henry, the heaviest curse of superstition appeared to be impending. But the king declared loudly, and probably with justice, his innocence as to the murder; and evading the more serious censures of the church, he contrived in the issue to retain the substance of the power which had occasioned this protracted and malevolent dispute.⁵⁰

Vigorous
policy of
Edward the
first.

On the questions which this controversy involved, the reign of Richard Cœur de Leon passed in that apparent tranquillity which often follows an interval of unusual commotion. But the reign of John is made up of hostility, which he directed by turns against the church, the state, and the papacy. While the sceptre is in the hand of Henry the third, the clergy are mostly the allies of the barons, and their coadjutors in their general efforts to lessen the thralldom of the king and of the nation. But it was left to the more vigorous policy of Edward the first, to impose the most important restrictions on the wealth and authority of the national priesthood. One of the earliest measures of that monarch bespoke his moderation and discernment. It reserved the final judgment of every criminal clergyman to the ecclesiastical authority;

⁴⁹ He contended after the meeting at Northampton, that the Saviour had been there rejudged in his person; and from that period, his cause was ever thus identified with that of religion. The account of his last moments which has descended to us, may be in substance correct; but it should be remembered, that it has been received on the authority of men who "made every part of Europe resound with the report of miracles wrought at his shrine." Ep. 40, Lingard, ubi supra.

⁵⁰ Henry's voluntary penance, though

well known, should not be passed over. It was in December, 1170, that Becket perished; it was in July, 1174, that Henry appeared as a penitent at the shrine of the primate. His protestation of innocence as to the murder, was accepted by about eighty ecclesiastics, who were invited to apply a lash thrice or more to his shoulders. The revolting ceremony performed, the king's affairs assumed from that day a better aspect, and, of course, as the consequence of Becket's intercession.

but it also provided, that this decision should be in every case preceded by an investigation before the lay tribunal, where the conviction of the accused should be followed by a forfeiture of his entire property to the king, excepting in cases where the sentence of the temporal should fail to be confirmed by that of the spiritual court. This adjustment of claims, from which so much acrimonious discussion had arisen, continued as the law of these rival authorities from the third year of Edward the first, to the accession of Elizabeth.⁵¹ In the thirteenth century the knights' fees connected with the landed property of this country, amounted to somewhat more than fifty-three thousand; and of these, twenty-eight thousand had passed into the hands of the clergy.⁵² To prevent the increase of this unnatural preponderance, Edward framed his celebrated statute of Mortmain, a law which left the then estates of the sacred order undisturbed, but prevented their farther increase, by consigning every future donation of such property to secular uses.⁵³ The benefit which arose to the nation from this enactment is not to be estimated. Still it was a regulation which reflected so much on the character of the clergy and implied so much at variance with those unearthly tendencies so boldly ascribed to the law of celibacy and the monastic life, that nothing but the perilous opulence which these orders had already acquired, can explain the event of their silent acquiescence.

It was, however, in the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Edward, that the comparative strength of the civic and clerical influence in this nation, became evident. The king requested a supply from the resources of the church: the clergy divided into four classes, beginning with the prelates, for the purpose of debating apart on the justice of the claim; and they were unanimous in stating, that

⁵¹ Collier, i. 478.

⁵² Turner, iii. 104.

⁵³ Stat. Mortmain, 7 Edw. I. and 13 Edw. I. c. 32.

CHAP.
III.

their possessions could not be laid under contribution to the necessities of the sovereign, without the consent of the pope; and in pleading a sacred exemption from the present demand, as secured by certain letters received from their ecclesiastical superior, which forbade their compliance. The conduct of Edward at this crisis, was summary and efficient. As churchmen had thus declared their property to be solely at the disposal of the pontiff, the monarch resolved that it should be left to the security which it might be in the power of that better guardian to bestow. The estates and the movables of ecclesiastics were made subject to a rigorous taxation, and the refractory, without an exception, were placed in their persons and possessions beyond the protection of the laws. The royal officers judged every cause in which the clergy were defendants, but discarded all in which they were plaintiffs. By such means that favoured class of persons was rendered painfully sensible of their previous obligation to authorities, the claims of which they had so deliberately contemned. The mantle of Becket had fallen to the ground: no second man appeared to protract the conflict, or to make it in any way costly to the sovereign.⁵⁴ It is probable, also, that the success of this measure, suggested to the parliament of Carlisle, their important statute of provisors; a legislative deed of a still bolder aspect, but directed principally against the avarice of Rome. Such had been the issue of the struggle between the crown and the clergy on the accession of Edward the second; and these limits of authority continued undisturbed, until the reins of government passed from the hands of that monarch to the better guidance of his son.

Limits of the
opposition
hitherto
manifested
by the Eng-
lish to the
papal claims.

It thus appears, that before the age of Wycliffe, the ambition and the avarice of the papal court were variously resisted, not only by our sovereigns and the nobility, but

⁵⁴ Wals. 68, 69. Heminford, i. 107. Matt. West, 429.

by the clergy and the people; and that a continuous effort was made, to preserve in the state a power which should preside over that of the church. The influence of these events on the spirit of reform, ere long so powerfully evinced in the nation, might be presumed to have been very considerable. That spirit, however, was scarcely perceptible, until exhibited in the character which it will be the object of some ensuing chapters to unfold. Nothing can exceed the revolting descriptions which are repeatedly given by Matthew Paris, of the court of Rome, and particularly of its unprincipled measures in relation to this vassal kingdom.⁵⁵ Yet nothing was farther from the heart of the monk of St. Albans, than to question even the temporal power of the popes.⁵⁶ By the laity, indeed, that branch of the papal empire was more than once disputed; but they were hardly less removed than their instructors, from the alarming impiety of resisting the spiritual jurisdiction so long conceded to the bishop of Rome. A nice distinction was generally preserved, between the less objectionable features of the system, and its more palpable abuses. Hence men were every where found, who held in abhorrence much of what was practised with all the freedom and constancy of habit, by popes, and cardinals, and hierarchies; and who at the same time applauded the violence directed to crush the few who had proceeded so far as to separate from a communion described as so impure. This inconsistency, so observable in the history of the church during the middle ages, was particularly prevalent among our ancestors previous to the appearance of Wycliffe.

⁵⁵ Hist. 438, 715, 802.—See also Malms. 338, 312; and Eadmer, 312.

⁵⁶ It is admitted that there was something plausible in the reasonings of the preacher, who, in the presence of king John, and on the ground assumed by Arnold of Brescia, denied the claim of the pontiff to any temporal dominion;

but he sufficiently discloses in this and in a subsequent instance that he was by no means prepared to affirm the truth of the doctrine thus supported, 228, 229, 608.—See the same deference to the same preposterous claim in Matthew of Westminster, Ann. 1209.

CHAP. III. To believe that religious benefits might be obtained in any way, apart from the established sacraments; or that such rites might be efficient, though performed by men despising the consecration presumed to be conferred on the clergy by St. Peter's representative; demanded a method of enquiry, and a degree of mental intrepidity, which we seek in vain among Englishmen, before the latter half of the fourteenth century.⁵⁷ Still the reign of pride and luxury, which had so long constituted the history of the Christian priesthood, must have diminished their influence with the more observing and disinterested; and in such minds it must sometimes have conduced to the reception of doctrines subversive of the spell which ages had imposed. The dispute between the first Edward, and the English hierarchy, compared with the similar contest of Henry the second, exhibits no small decline of this peculiar homage. So few ties were there, either of fear or attachment, between the shepherds and their flock, that the clergy were no sooner thrown out of the king's protection, than they found themselves friendless, exposed to every insult in their persons, and to every depredation in their property. The primate, himself, who had conducted the opposition to the crown, fled for safety to an obscure cottage, with a single servant; and mourned in secret, over the stern policy, and the altered times, which had so far destroyed the iniquity of sacrilege, and exposed an order, designated sacred, to vulgar resentment and contempt. If Becket's partial ascendancy was too dearly purchased to render his example dangerous, this total failure of the united hierarchy must have operated still more to suppress every loftier purpose of sacerdotal ambition. To this period,

⁵⁷ Lanfranc had proceeded so far as to intimate that the dying might not be excluded from the felicities of the just, though they should depart without

receiving the elements of the eucharist. This liberal tenet, however, was applied to those only who had received a canonical baptism.—Dacheries. Spicel. iv. 227.

however, the doctrine of the church, corrupt as it was, formed a citadel, which but few men had ventured, even remotely, to assail; and so partial were the hostilities which we have noticed as directed against its discipline, that no solitary mind had appeared, possessing sufficient hardihood to question the validity of clerical pretensions with respect to an exclusive power of communicating spiritual gifts. The numerous sects scattered through the states of the continent, had in general felt the vassalage which such doctrines entailed upon them. But they learned to regard the evidences of personal religion, when connected with natural endowments, as forming the best credentials of ministerial efficiency; and, as a consequence, refused even the semblance of that homage which is due to the legitimate pastor, where the spiritual character which that office demands could not be discovered.

But in England, the tenets of that people were almost unknown. The native writers frequently mentioned them, but they were evidently in ignorance with regard to the opinions of the men whom they attempt to describe. Their narrations include little besides a detail of the worst calumnies in circulation respecting the Albigensian sects; and on the faith of such statements, the most popular and enlightened of our historians relate the perfidy and crime of the catholic crusaders, not only without censure, but with marked approbation.⁵⁸ So far was the fame of Simon de Montfort promoted, by that contempt alike of justice and of mercy which characterised the wars of Languedoc, that miracles were said to be wrought at his tomb, and in this nation the story was credited. A son of that nobleman, who had shared in the deeds of his father, and hoped to inherit

SECT.
I.

Their ignorance respecting the character of the continental sectaries.

⁵⁸ This prejudice is not peculiar to Gervase, (1441,) to Hoveden, (A. D. 1176,) nor to the writer in the Annals of Waverly, (173;) but is observable

in the more candid William of Newberry, (ii. 13,) and is no where more intolerant than in the stern Matthew Paris, 322, 324.

CHAP. that earthly reward which the aged chieftain had
 III.

coveted in vain, came to England in 1238; nor was there any thing in his previous history to prevent his being successively known as the favourite of the 'king and of the people.⁵⁹ The authority of the English sovereign over various of the French provinces, through which the existing sectaries were scattered, might have opened an easy connection between them and this Island. But during the thirteenth century the name of Montfort was connected with England, and was among that unhappy people synonymous with the Principle of evil. The fate, also, of some of their brethren, who at an earlier period had visited the shores of this country, may contribute to explain the fact of the total disappearance of emigrant sectaries from our subsequent annals; and the circumstances, likewise, which left the reforming energies of England to arise almost entirely from within itself.

The story of Gerard and his followers.

It was in the year 1159 that there appeared in England a band of strangers, consisting of about thirty persons of both sexes. Their language was that of Germany, their avowed object secular occupation. But their neglect of some religious customs soon attracted the notice of the people and clergy, and they were committed to prison with a view to farther enquiry respecting their opinions. At Oxford, a synod was convened by the authority of the king to ascertain the tenets of the fugitives. Their morals were unimpeached, their faith was admitted to be orthodox, and Gerard, their pastor, is acknowledged to have been a man of learning. In the presence of the council, he spoke for himself and his followers, stating in reply

⁵⁹ It should be observed, however, that the popularity of the earl of Leicester in England, arose from his adherence to the cause of the people, as

opposed to the demands of the pontiffs, and of the court. Pegge's Grossteste, ubi supra.

to various questions, that they were christians, and attached to the doctrine of the apostles. But the whole are said to have been convicted of rejecting baptism and the eucharist, marriage and catholic communion. They had, perhaps, learned to discard the pernicious tenet of baptismal regeneration, or it may be, withheld that ordinance entirely from infants. It is also known that the eucharist, if unconnected with the doctrine of transubstantiation; and marriage, if abandoned as a sacrament; would be viewed by churchmen of the twelfth century as wholly contemned; and men dissenting thus far from the established dogmas, might be expected to guard with caution against the spiritual impurity inseparable from communion with an apostate church. That their obnoxious opinions were really of this harmless description is the only conclusion that charity or reason may adopt. They were exhorted to repent of their errors, but their abhorrence of dissimulation was much stronger than their fear of man; and when menaced, their reply was, in the language of their Lord, "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." An obscure female was their only proselyte, and she was easily induced to abandon her new profession. But to prevent the spreading of the contagion, Gerard and his flock were condemned as heretics, and delivered to the secular arm for correction. By the policy or the passion of Henry the second, they were doomed to be branded on the forehead; to be publicly whipped through the city; and to be cut off from the smallest charities of social life. Gerard passed at the head of his disciples, who, under the tortures inflicted by the lash, joined him in singing,—“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my

CHAP.
III.

sake." Escaped from the hands of their persecutors, they were exposed to the rage of the elements, with their flesh lacerated, naked to the waist, deprived alike of shelter and of food. A sentence which should have doomed them to the stake, would have been merciful, when compared with this wanton exposure of men and women to all the horrors of a lingering dissolution. It is believed that they all perished miserably. The monk, to whom we are indebted for these particulars, records it as to the honour of his country, that these were the first heretics known in England, since the arrival of the Saxons; and then, in the spirit which has descended to some modern historians, he abandons the sufferers without a sigh to their fate.⁶⁰ Another company of sectaries who were denominated Albigenses, and said to have reached our country during the reign of John, seem to have been equally unhappy in their choice of an asylum, as in the elegant language of the canon of Leicester, they were "burned alive."⁶¹

⁶⁰ Gul. Newbrig. ii. 13. In a council at Tours, about two years later, the archbishop of Canterbury, with certain of his suffragans, became parties to the enactment of a law which imposed this penalty on all who should be convicted of the Albigensian heresy. The philosophy of that part of this pastoral decree which separated the offender from all the charities of humanity, is gravely stated by Collier, to have been "that being thrown out of the advantages of civil society, they might be brought to recollection and repentance." (349.) The law was repeated in the third Lateran council. (Hoveden, 332.) The only portion of the disgraceful tale related above, which connects itself with the sympathies of Dr. Lingard, is the wearisome exercise which such an ex-

amination must have proved to the members of the synod! Hist. iii. 420.

⁶¹ The following is the entire statement of Knighton, "Albigenses heretici venerunt in Angliam, quorum aliqui comburebantur vivi." (2418.) That this fact should be unnoticed by any earlier historian, may excite a suspicion of Knighton's correctness; but this writer, in common with most of our monastic historians, appears to have had access to sources of information which are lost to us; and it is certain, that so early as the reign of John, the stake, as the punishment of religious delinquency, was not strictly unknown in this country. A clerk who, to possess the person of a Jewess, is said to have secretly renounced his christianity, was sentenced to die that death by a

These deeds of cruelty were intended to operate as a warning on future emigrants, and they appear to have separated the English people, during three centuries, from that intercourse with the continental sects which had thus commenced. It would, however, be unjust to suppose, that the zeal of the native clergy, during the long interval from the conquest to the age of Wycliffe, was directed in no instance to higher objects, than the accumulation of wealth, or the protection of their political influence. While such was the character but too prevalent with that order of men, it is certain that it admitted of some important exceptions. Lanfranc, who filled the see of Canterbury under the Conqueror, may not be thought to have aided the cause of piety by his laboured defence of transubstantiation. But that patron of monachism was the stern foe of monastic corruption, and the spirit pervading his general instructions was not wholly unworthy of his station. He knew the depravity of the heart, could deplore the subtlety and power of temptation, and while pointing the believer to the true sources of religious aid, has afforded a pleasing evidence of his own devotional feeling.⁶² Anselm, who next filled the chair of Augustine, was better instructed in the doctrines peculiar to the gospel; and in his mind they were evidently associated with that feeling of spiritual prostration and confidence, which they so powerfully tend to produce when truly embraced.⁶³

SECT.
I.

Sincere devotion sometimes observable among the English clergy of this period.

Lanfranc.

Anselm.

synod of Oxford, in 1222.—Chron. Wikes, 39. Collier, 423. Eight years previous to that event, the primate of the English church, and others of the clergy, were present at the fourth council of Lateran, in which the most violent measures were agreed to, in the hope of completing the over-

throw of heresy. This zeal of the pontiff and of his continental allies, may have led our churchmen to anticipate the statute.—De Heretico Comburendo.

⁶² Dacherius Spicel. iv. 227.

⁶³ His "Meditations" are a sufficient proof on the points adverted to.

CHAP. But of the prelates who were raised to the same
 III. dignity, from the death of Anselm to the thirteenth century, it appears that while some were chiefly occupied in state affairs, others were found in the camp of the crusaders, or were liable to the charge, even at that period, of incapacity and negligence. That the most hopeful among them participated in the religious feeling of Anselm, or of his distinguished predecessor, is in no small measure

St. Edmund. doubtful. In 1232, Edmund, a prebend of Salisbury, and a dignitary who had acquired the reputation of learning, and of unusual piety, was called to the see of Canterbury. It was an elevation, however, which was not to contribute to his comfort. Judging of other natures apparently by his own, the new metropolitan ventured to caution his sovereign against certain evil advisers, and to complain of the avaricious conduct of the papacy. But the temper of Henry the third, and the policy of the papal court, proved less manageable than the archbishop had anticipated; and his death, after an interval of eight years, is attributed to the grief excited by the civil and religious disorders of his country. His work, intitled *Speculum Ecclesiæ*, has been preserved, and is a production strongly imbued with the religious opinions and the devout aspirations of Augustine. Edmund was conversant with the writings of that father, and not less so with the sacred scriptures; nor could he have taught at all as he has written, without censuring, at least indirectly, the false doctrines, the debasing customs, and indeed, nearly the whole of the superstitions so prevalent in his day. Of the popularity which the archbishop acquired by his writings we are ignorant; but it is pleasing to observe that his memory was so far revered by the clergy as to induce an earnest appeal

for his canonization—an event which took place in the seventh year from his decease.⁶⁴

SECT.
I.

It must, however, be added, that in the annals of Canterbury, amid much which cannot fail to offend the historian of religion, there is very little to merit his regard, from the death of Edmund in 1240, to the election of Bradwardine in 1349. The prelate last named was born during the reign of Edward the first. He was a student of Merton college, Oxford; and in 1335, is known as one of its proctors. His life was that of a scholar, unmarked by any striking incident. But among the names of the most distinguished English schoolmen, is that of Bradwardine; and by various modern writers he has been regarded as not altogether unworthy of his peculiar appellation as “The Profound.” As the chaplain of Edward the third, he accompanied that monarch in his French campaigns, and the influence of his prudence and humanity is supposed to have contributed much to the moral reputation both of the king and of the army. In 1349, he was a second time elected to the see of Canterbury. The dignity previously declined was then accepted; but his death, which occurred a few weeks subsequent, left the honours of his new station to be accepted by Simon de Islip. Whether Bradwardine, who had so far excelled as a divine, would have been equally as efficient as a metropolitan, may be doubted; but in the former capacity his proficiency was believed to be unrivalled. The lectures delivered by him in Merton hall, not many years prior to Wycliffe’s residence as a student in that seminary, were published in a volume which extends to nearly nine hundred

Bradwardine.

⁶⁴ Matt. Paris, 375, 376, 442, 443, 544, 545, 627. Of his “Speculum Ecclesie,” there is more than one copy among the manuscripts of the British

Museum. Mr. Turner has given an analysis of the work in the fifth volume of his History.

CHAP. folio pages, and was entitled, "De Causa Dei," or,
III. the Cause of God against Pelagius. In this curious
production, where the various knowledge, and the
scholastic taste of the author, are alike conspicuous,
the essential doctrines of the gospel are explained and
defended with a felicity which has been noticed by
the divines of a later period with equal pleasure and
surprise. The object of the work is to demonstrate
the present depravity of human nature, and as a con-
sequence, its entire dependence on the atonement of
the cross, and on the influence of the Divine Spirit
for salvation. It is certain that the doctrine of Brad-
wardine had been previously known to a portion, at
least, of the English clergy, and that, in some in-
stances, it had been sincerely adopted. In conducting
his argument, however, the writer often complains that
these scriptural tenets were rarely announced to his
contemporaries, but to be despised. While some are
described as wholly rejecting the influence of the Spi-
rit, others are said to regard it in the light of a re-
ward, conferred in consequence of some self-sustained
and meritorious service. Comparing his state as the
advocate of a less flattering creed, with that of Elijah
when deserted by the priesthood and by the whole
people of his country, the Oxford professor feelingly
exclaims, "What multitudes support Pelagius, and with
clamour, and raillery, and derision—almost the whole
world is gone after Pelagius into error!" The zeal
of Bradwardine, directed thus vigorously toward a re-
formation of the doctrine of the church, passed over
the flagrant evils in its polity and discipline. But in
managing this serious department of controversy, he
has availed himself freely of the reasonings brought to
the same questions by the genius of Augustine; and
it is a certain evidence of mental improvement, that

his work, abstruse as it was in many of its parts, became immediately and extensively popular. Its success also, may be viewed as favourable to the cause of the theological opinions, which towards the close of the same century, were published by Wycliffe and his coadjutors with still greater efficiency.⁶⁵

While such men were occasionally raised to the archiepiscopal dignity, it may be stated of the far greater number affording less evidence of piety, that the majority were patrons of a morality as little exceptionable as was then known, and of a discipline in some respects favourable to devotion. The history of the suffragan prelaties would doubtless bear comparison in these particulars with that of the primacy. It must, however, be sufficient here to remark, that the "Sentences" of the celebrated Peter Lombard, illustrate the moral condition of man, and the articles of the christian salvation no less distinctly than the writings of Bradwardine; and this ingenious collection of ancient authorities in defence of primitive truth, was so far appreciated by the clergy as to call forth a succession of commentators from the year 1170, to the time of Wycliffe.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ A sketch of the life of Bradwardine may be seen prefixed to the edition of his works published by Sir Henry Seville. It will not be supposed that the writings of Bradwardine are wholly untingered with the superstitions of the period. So confident was this profound theologian of the efficacy of the royal touch to remove the scrofula, that it is thus he writes on the matter: "Oh! christian, whoever thou art denying miracles, come and with thine own eyes behold, come into England, approach the presence of the king, and bring with thee the christian afflicted with this malady, and though it be very unsightly, deep, and invete-

rate, in the name of Jesus Christ, by prayer, benediction, the sight of the cross, and the imposition of hands, he shall cure him."—*De Causa Dei*, lib. i. c. i. 39.

⁶⁶ On the office of the Holy Spirit the "Master of the Sentences" thus writes: "Being itself love, as it unites by that the Divine Father and the Son, so it connects us with both. By its sacred influence we love God, and we love mankind; and he who cherishes the affection by which he is attached to his fellow-creatures, loves God in himself, because that affection is divine since God is love." "There is nothing in man by which he can love

CHAP.
III.

General
state of reli-
gion in Eng-
land at the
opening of
the Four-
teenth cen-
tury.

We shall err, however, very seriously, in judging of the religious state of our ancestors during the fourteenth century, unless we attend to the aspects of society peculiar to that period, and dismiss the impressions made by present appearances. The aristocracy of this kingdom was not then broken into those numerous sections which are observable in more recent times; and the distance between the weak and the powerful was in consequence considerably greater. Commerce had not yet so far intervened, as to impart its connecting and wholesome influences to the extreme portions of the community. In the race of intellect the same disparity prevailed. Those who were at all learned, were generally devoted to it with an ardour which is now scarcely credible, presenting, as viewed in connection with the vast majority around them, a contrast hardly less striking than that of the day and

God, but which is from God: nothing is more excellent than this gift. There are other agencies of the Spirit, but without this result nothing will avail us. This sacred feeling alone, divides the two future kingdoms." Following St. Augustine, he teaches, "that predestination is the preparation of grace, but cannot be without prescience. Though there may be prescience without predestination, because the Deity foreknows evil, but does not produce it He has predestined those whom he elects, he has reprobated the rest. The number of the elect is definite." Free-will is defined as "that faculty of reason and will by which, with assisting grace, good is chosen:" and this assisting grace is said to be necessary to prepare the heart of man to wish good as well as to attain it. "The mind has no natural aptitude to believe and love, but needs the heavenly grace to give it the right direction and to make its powers and effects available to their end." He urges that our Sa-

viour "died for our deliverance and beatification." He became the sacrifice for us, and by his death we have obtained access to paradise, redemption from sin, and the adoption of the sons of glory. None but the lion of the tribe of Judah could have accomplished this. All other men are debtors." Faith is said to operate by love. "By this Christ dwells in the heart. Faith without love is vain. Faith with this affection is a christian's faith; without it a demon's." By the faith which is allied to love, "the impious are justified." The following are some of the commentators on this work mentioned in Bale (Scriptores) Adamus, (1170.) Brixius, (1222.) Castriconens, (1270.) Borstal, (1250.) Blunt, (1296.) Beverly, (1291.) Brinkelacus, (1310.) Acton, (1320.) Adam Hibern. (1320.) Buckingham, (1321.) Cardinalis, (1325.) Alienantius, (1340.) Catton, (1343.) Bedencus, (1380).—See Turner, v. 75—80.

the night, or of the living with the dead. These statements will be sufficiently illustrated in the course of our narrative.⁶⁷ The inquiry at present demanding our principal attention, respects the provisions made in the discipline of the Anglican church, for the enlightening of the popular mind at this period. That the scriptures were unknown to the people, is certain; and the laborious compositions of the most applauded teachers fully demonstrate, that they thought of nothing less than of addressing their productions to vulgar capacities. Those knights of intellect rarely descended to the arena but with equals. The clergy, indeed, were anticipated as the students and champions of their works; but among laymen, the most powerful might be enrolled as illustrious, though strangers to the humblest acquirements in literature; while the causes which had separated the mass of the people from the remotest share in the divisions of political power, fixed them in a state equally removed from every thing deserving the name of mental culture. The vassalage of the body, was the feeble emblem of that which had been imposed on the mind; nor does it appear to have been seriously suspected by the nobles or the

⁶⁷ The Troubadour poem called "Partenopex de Blois," appears to have been written in the thirteenth century. In a note appended to a recent translation of it the translator observes, that churl, or carle, and villain, were the lowest casts of society, the first holding land on condition of performing servile offices in husbandry, the last being attached to the land as slaves. Hence, as Mr. Ellis observes, these denominations were used "to signify any thing of a character opposed to learning, courtesy, and knight-hood." But the same translator has described another Troubadour as setting out by "predicating it as an acknowledged truth, that villains cannot

be admitted into heaven;" and as concluding with a lament over that ill-fated class of beings, "who, sbat out from paradise, have not even the alternative of hell," (Notes on Canto ii. of Partenopex). The filthy tales employed to illustrate this tenet, prove the delicacy of the knights and ladies, for whose amusement they were invented, to be about as defective as their theology. When it is remembered, that the degraded portion of European society referred to, included by far its larger division, the state of existence which could secure the least currency to the doctrine stated, must have been afflictive beyond description.

CHAP. III. — priesthood that their mutual tyranny was opposed either to the precepts or the genius of the christian religion.

The thirteenth century was drawing towards its close, when archbishop Peckham complained in an assembly of the clergy, that the duty of preaching had been so extensively neglected, as to reduce no small portion of the English people to the state of "the poor and needy, who seek water, and there is none, and whose tongue fail for thirst."⁶⁸ To supply this serious deficiency, the primate submitted to the council, a statement of the topics which in future should constitute the matter of regular parochial instruction. This summary includes the decalogue, the fourteen articles of faith, the seven deadly sins, the seven principal virtues, the seven works of mercy, and the usual sacraments. Of the fourteen articles of faith, the first seven relate to the mysteries of the trinity, the remaining, to the person, the sufferings, and the general mediation of the Saviour. The seven deadly sins include pride, anger, hatred, impiety, covetousness, and intemperance. The seven works of mercy are to compassionate the hungry, the thirsty, and the naked, to bury the friendless, and to aid the sick, the neglected, and the poor. Of the principal virtues, faith, hope, and charity, are described as referring to God; while justice, fortitude, temperance, and prudence, are viewed as relating to men. These epitomes of religious instruction are thus particularly stated, because they are frequently mentioned in the history of the church, through several centuries preceding the reformation. In the present instance they were published with explanations which, if really needed, imply the state of the inferior clergy to have been that of the lowest barbarism. Hence, the extent of the

⁶⁸ Spelman, ii. 302, &c. I find these constitutions adduced by Collier as presenting the most favourable speci-

men of episcopal vigilance in the age under review, Ecclesiastical History, i. 284.

improvement proposed by this metropolitan reformer, consisted in providing that each clerk should deliver four sermons to his parishioners within a year. These discourses also, were to be on some of the themes above described, each of which was so far explained, as to demand from the preacher but little more than the mechanical effort of transcription.

To escape the most painful apprehensions concerning the religious state of the people subject to such defective arrangements, we must not only suppose the instructions conveyed by every public teacher to have been the most pure and appropriate which inspiration could suggest, but we must presume on an aptitude in the minds of men, during the fourteenth century, to embrace the truths of revelation, which is wholly unknown among ourselves. In the present age, the capacity of reading, the art of printing, and the easy possession of books, are all annexed to certain public expositions of christian truth which return with the sabbath, or if in some instances with less, in others with greater frequency. Still, how partially informed, and how slow to perceive the beauty of religion, is the larger number of our present population! Reasoning from their case to that of their ancestors, we shrink from the scene of religious ignorance, which must have been exhibited by a vast community, in which, with very few exceptions, oral communication was the only source of knowledge, and where the extent of that consisted in a brief address repeated at the close of each quarter of the year. But we are not allowed the partial gratification of supposing, that the instructions thus sparingly conveyed, were of a superior, or even of an exceptionable character. The canonical regulations enforced by the primate last named, limited salvation to the pale of the church, and viewed it as dependent on the valid performance of sacramental

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services. The tendency of this established doctrine, was to induce a greater confidence in the official aid of the priest, than in the state of the heart, or in the character of God. And to oppose this delusion was a duty to which the clergy of the middle ages were but rarely inclined. Indeed, in the doctrine thus interpreted, there was so much to commend itself to the degraded mind of the populace in every country, that solitary cautions respecting it, unless urged under peculiar circumstances, must have been feeble in their result.

It was about ten years before the birth of Wycliffe, that Walter Reynolds was called to the primacy of the English church. On returning from Rome, where his opulence is said to have greatly befriended him, the metropolitan appeared empowered by the pontiff to exercise through every bishopric the whole right of its diocesan for three years; and to select one preferment from those of each cathedral church. He was also authorised to remove the guilt of all offences committed within the last hundred days, if confessed with penitence; to restore a hundred disorderly persons; and to absolve two hundred men from the sin of laying violent hands on the persons of the clergy. He was declared to be farther competent, in the name of the pope, to qualify a hundred youths of uncanonical age, for holding benefices, and forty clergymen for holding more than one benefice with the cure of souls.⁶⁹ Thus supplied, the archbishop commenced his visitations. If the spirit of unprincipled traffic was thus conspicuous in the heads of the church, the reader will judge of the laxity, the errors, and the vices, which would be extended, almost of necessity, throughout its humbler departments. The people entrusted to such pastors, must have been, to an alarming extent, "destroyed for lack of knowledge."

⁶⁹ Wilkin's Concilia, ii. 433—444.

But it will be important, before proceeding to the life of our reformer, to notice the influence of commerce on the character of society, previous to his times; and also that revival of learning, and of the arts, whence the universities derive their origin. These events, had contributed much to the efforts which have been described as tending to introduce a less enslaving polity, and a less corrupted faith, into the English church. But the period of their greater influence was still future. The Albigensian martyrs had perhaps indulged the hope of purifying the religion of mankind; but with "the bleeding remnant" of that people, every such anticipation must have long since expired. It is true the causes which in England prepared the way for a reception of the principles of the reformation were not peculiar to it. Such, however, was the horror of heretical pravity which the church in vindication of the past, and from apprehension of the future, had with much labour impressed on the popular mind, that no truly religious renovation could be anticipated, unless conducted by men of the purest character, and who should unite the reputation of the scholar with the zeal of the apostle. The champions of orthodoxy were generally found in the rising universities, and hence those seats of learning were frequently hailed as the bulwarks of the church. Thus a seminary of this character arose amidst the massacres of Languedoc, and was expected to act as a coadjutor to the holy office. But ignorance is alone favourable to mental usurpation. From such establishments, religion was to obtain some of her most devoted and most successful disciples, as in Wycliffe, Huss, and Jerome, and a host beside, who, as the light dawned, awoke to hail it!

SECTION II.

THE FEUDAL SYSTEM.—PROGRESS OF ENGLISH COMMERCE.—ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CONSTITUTION.—THE DECLINE OF LEARNING.—RISE OF THE UNIVERSITIES.—STATE OF LEARNING IN ENGLAND IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.—SCHOLASTIC PHILOSOPHY—ITS GOOD AND EVIL INFLUENCE.—CIVIL AND CANON LAW.—A SUMMARY OF THE PRELIMINARY CHAPTERS.

CHAP. III.
 The feudal system.

THE elements of the feudal polity were not unknown to the Anglo-Saxon tribes; but the maturity of the system in England is to be numbered among the effects of the conquest. The new possessions of William and of his followers were acquired by the sword; and were to be retained, but by a military establishment, pervading every portion of the conquered territory. The barons received their lands from the crown, and on condition of appearing in defence of the king and of the kingdom on every emergency. On such occasions, the followers of each lord were determined—with respect to numbers and equipment—by the extent of his possessions; and these again were men who held their portions of the baronial estate, on the same conditions with regard to the baron, which had been previously demanded from that chieftain, as the immediate tenant of the whole, by the sovereign. Such, too, was the jurisdiction of those chief tenants of the crown, that every barony became a petty kingdom; nor were the exactions of the monarch from the aristocracy really so arbitrary as those which commonly oppressed the people, and in some cases even the military vassals, as subject to the will of these lesser or tributary

princes. However tyrannical his superior, the soldier could hardly violate his oath of fealty without becoming odious;¹ while the greater part of the community employed in cultivating the soil, or in those ruder arts which were then practised, were wholly dependent on the mercies of this local despotism. Various circumstances, indeed, and very different motives, would sometimes operate to soften the aspect of these military tyrannies, and to render the feudal system a mixture "of liberty and oppression, order and anarchy, stability and revolution."² But a system in which honour was exclusively associated with the profession of arms, must have been unfriendly to mental cultivation. Commerce also must have struggled with every difficulty, when to acquire wealth, however reputably, was often but to provoke the rapacity of the powerful. Nor can we conceive an object less likely to interest the mind, deeply imbued with the feudal temper, than the religion of the gospel.³

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¹ Thus the Conqueror professed himself shocked at the depravity of Harold, who could venture to meet him in the field in contempt of an oath of fealty, though unfairly extorted; and even the brothers of that chieftain attempted to dissuade him from mingling in the struggle for the same reason.—Orderic, 176. Mals. 56.

² Humc, Appendix ii.

³ It is curious to remark the scientific character which soon began to be assumed by the various companies of tradesmen, and which, as a result of the same spirit of improvement, was blended readily with almost every form of amusement. Hence, trades are designated "mysteries," and even hunting and hawking are called the mysteries of woods and rivers; nor was less discipline required to excel in the latter than in the former. "In an age," observes Sir Walter Scott,

"when knowledge was rare, there prevailed a natural disposition to attach mystery to the most common trades, and even to the amusements of the period. Arts, but imperfectly known to the possessors themselves, were rendered dark and impenetrable to the uninitiated, by the introduction of minute forms and the use of a peculiar phraseology. Shrouded by such disguises, ignorance itself assumed the language and the port of mysterious knowledge, and the mystic orders of religion and of chivalry, were imitated in the inferior associations of mechanics and fellow crafts. It is, therefore, no wonder that the chase, the exclusive amusement, or rather the only pacific employment of the great, should be decorated with an appropriate diction, and rendered solemn by an established code of regulations."—Notes on Sir Tristrem.

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Progress of
English
commerce.

Commerce, however, was destined to revive and flourish, even in this uncongenial atmosphere. The number of the people employed in the useful arts before the middle of the fourteenth century must have been considerable. The pursuits of agriculture which were improved with every age, preferred a constant demand on the ingenuity and labour of the mechanic.⁴ The multitude of structures which were raised during the same period, both for civil and religious purposes, demonstrate the proficiency which had been acquired in the science of architecture, and in the working of metals. These appearances warrant the conclusion that many thousands of the community were thus occupied.⁵ The weaving of linen and woollen cloths had been practised with some success by the Anglo-Saxons, but was greatly improved under the Anglo-Norman princes. The Flemings who were connected with England by the conquest, were unrivalled in the production of those manufactures; their emigration was in consequence encouraged, and from the reign of Stephen, weavers are found existing in guilds, or privileged corporations. The internal trade of the nation will hardly admit of description. It was of course conducted in fairs and markets. But London, Bristol, and Ross in Pembrokeshire, to-

⁴ It is evident from Ingulf, that the attendants of the Conqueror were not all negligent of agriculture, (77, 78). And the church frequently pronounced its anathema on all who should disturb the persons employed in that important avocation, (Council of Lateran, 1179). It is also well known, that a large portion of the clergy were much attached both to the theory and the practice of that science, (Gervase, 1400). See on this subject, Strutt's Complete View of the Manners of England, and Dr. Henry's Chapters on the Arts.

⁵ Orderic, x. 788. The statements of this writer fully warrant the language

of my text, and those of Malmesbury are to the same effect, Hist. 57. The Conqueror was probably aware that the want of fortifications had greatly facilitated the subjugation of the country, and hence his ardour in raising them, (Matt. Paris, 8). The castles built in England within twenty years, during the reign of Stephen, are said to have been more than eleven hundred, (Duceto, 528). This called forth a new lamentation from the writers of the Saxon Chronicle, as it imposed much additional toil on the already afflicted population of the country.

gether with the Five Ports, consisting of Hastings, Dover, Romney, Hythe, and Sandwich, were particularly celebrated as the marts of foreign commerce. The trade of Bristol was principally with Ireland. But that of London is described by a contemporary in the reign of Henry the second, as attracting the merchants of the most distant states to the English shores.⁶ The articles exported, were chiefly horses, leather, wool, cloths, and corn; also metals, particularly tin and lead; and to the close of the fourteenth century, the sale of the native villains, as slaves, was not wholly unknown. In return for such articles of commerce, our ancestors received the wines, drugs, and spices of other climates; and thus also they became possessed of gold, precious stones, and silks, with various furs and linens.

The domestic trade was conducted solely by the natives, but the foreign traffic was almost exclusively in the hand of strangers;—persons who were frequently regarded with much jealousy by the people, but generally protected by the sovereign. The Conqueror was aware that he had nearly annihilated the infant commerce of the Anglo-Saxons, and endeavoured to repair the evil by the encouragement of foreign artists. It was to render the English coasts more inviting to foreigners, that Henry the second published his humane laws concerning wrecks. His perception of the advantages of commerce, also suggested his prohibiting the emigration of native seamen, or the sale of any English vessel to strangers, under the severest penalties. The only important measures of Richard the first related to this object; and John, in addition to his claim of dominion over the British seas, the establishment of various guilds, or corporations of mechanics and merchants, promised obedience

⁶ Fitz-Stephen's description of London.

CHAP. to the clause of Magna Charta, which placed the
 III. foreign trader under the king's protection, and in the event of war, secured him the treatment shewn to the English by his countrymen. Many of the laws adopted by succeeding monarchs with regard to commerce were injurious in their tendency, but the evil arose from inexperience, and not from design. It is observable, however, that the imports of the country were chiefly articles of luxury; while its exports were from among the more useful productions of art or nature. This will appear the more surprising, if we remember the many vexatious imposts to which the merchant was sometimes liable; the immense expenditure incurred by our continental wars; and the vast sums of which the land was constantly deprived, by the popes, and by their creatures, the Italian clergy.⁷

Its influence
 on the con-
 stitution.

By the spirit of commercial enterprise, which, during the middle ages, was gradually diffused over the states of Europe, an important share of talent and activity was happily diverted from the business of war. From the wealth thus obtained, also arose a taste for comparative refinement; and hence, the history of the commercial cities so memorable in the annals of Italy and Germany, of the Netherlands, and of some other countries, is invariably associated with the revival of literature, and with the progress of civil freedom. Compared, indeed, with that of some contemporary states, the trade of England was long inconsiderable.⁸ But it advanced with little interruption, and its various benefits, more slowly acquired, were to be longer preserved. The Norman barons were for a while the only representatives of the English people,

⁷ These brief notices of the commerce of England, from the eleventh to the fourteenth century, have been selected partly from Dr. Henry, vi.

255—311. viii 319—358, but principally from Anderson's History of Commerce, i. 111—365.

⁸ Robertson's Introduction, note xxx.

and almost the only guardians of the national property. Their policy would shield the communities immediately dependent upon them, from illegal exaction on the part of the sovereign. But the wealth of the trading population could not be wholly exempt from the claims of the crown; and to render that source of revenue more productive, as well as to diminish the power of the greater barons, our kings not only incorporated numerous mercantile fraternities, but readily enfranchised various boroughs.⁹ By such steps, the monarch greatly facilitated the introduction of knights of the shires, and the representatives of boroughs, into the national assembly, as constitutional guardians of the liberty and the property of the commons. The first English parliament of this equitable character, appears to have been that convened in the thirty-ninth year of Henry the third. After this period, certain aids may have been extorted from the commons without the consent of their representatives; but it is certain, that from this epoch, such measures were generally reprobated as oppressive, and as a departure from the good laws of the nation. The dependence on the subject, which the necessities of the crown could not fail to induce, would be frequently regretted by the monarch. Still he must have known that the sovereign had less to apprehend from the commons, than from the nobles and the church. It is true the grants made by that portion of the legislature were as rarely made unconditionally as those of the barons or of the clergy; but the aid of the commons was more easily obtained, inasmuch, as an improved administration of justice, and a very partial elevation of the people, formed, through several ages, the extent of their claims. Attempts are sometimes made by theorists to separate despotic power from its injustice, and to exhibit it in that state as the perfection of political rule; but the votaries

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II.

⁹ Brady on Boroughs. Robertson's Introduction, sect. i.

CHAP. III. of this idle speculation must reason from a very limited attention to human nature. Whatever contributes to mental energy in any portion of a community is a political benefit. The connecting of the understanding and of the feelings of men, with the affairs of their country, is important, not only as securing that improvement of the faculties, which is the necessary consequence of their exercise, but, as generally strengthening every bond of patriotism. In the history of the English house of commons, especially when separated from the lords, and left to the unfettered application of its own resources, we discern the healthy stimulus which is often imparted to the few, when called to responsible deliberations in behalf of the many. That class of persons, and those who were represented by them, formed the body of the nation, and as protection was extended to the pursuits of commerce, the habits of industry and peacefulness gradually succeeded to those of depredation and bloodshed. The gains also of such occupation would necessarily produce a solicitude for equitable laws, and for their impartial execution; and thus an activity which it required but little generous feeling to awaken, proved favourable to the progress of the milder sentiments of justice, humanity, and religion.¹⁰

The decline
of learning.

The revival of learning was inseparable from these signs of improvement. It has appeared that when the nations of Europe abandoned the worship of idols, and made their profession of christianity, they were not more indebted to the clergy for their new religious observances, than for that portion of learning which they afterwards acquired. The cathedral or the convent, to which the unhappy sometimes repaired for the consolations of piety, were often equally esteemed by the studious as the only

¹⁰ On this subject Mr. Hallam's work on the middle ages, cannot be extended and eloquent chapter, in his too strongly recommended.

source of knowledge. The schools connected with such establishments, were intended chiefly to secure a class of instructed persons to fill the several ecclesiastical offices; but their advantages were not always restricted to candidates for the priesthood.¹¹ Authority and emolument were conferred on these and similar institutions by Charlemagne and Alfred. By the West-Saxon monarch, indeed, it was expressed as a wish, that the child of every freeman, not in the most needy circumstances, might be taught to read; and that such as should aspire to any official dignity, might be farther instructed in the language of ancient Rome.¹² But these princes were succeeded by others who failed to inherit either their genius or philanthropy; and their zeal in the cause of literature, was the feature of their character which it was deemed of least importance to emulate. Charles was no sooner removed, than the character of the western clergy began to decline with rapidity; and, if we except England while under the sceptre of Alfred, the annals of the hierarchy, from the close of the eighth century to that of the eleventh, consist of little beside the growing proofs of incapacity or corruption on the part of its ministers.¹³

The learning of England through many centuries was

¹¹ The celebrated Dunstan, on completing his education in the abbey of Glastonbury, tried his fortune as a courtier; his failure in that character was followed by his ascetic passion.—Turner's Hist. ii. p. iv. c. 5.

¹² Alfred's Præf. ad Past. 85. Asser, 46—49.

¹³ Bruckeri Hist. Philos. lib. vii. c. ii. In a work entitled, "The Mirror of Human Life," composed by Roderic, a bishop of Zamora, the writer complains that the clergy to whose care the conventual schools were intrusted, had become so far notorious for vice and ignorance, as to be alike

unable and unwilling to discharge the duties of their office, and that the name only was retained for the sake of the emolument, (ibid. c. xvii.) It is admitted also, by some catholic writers among ourselves, that the ignorance and sloth of the clergy were among the principal causes of that degeneracy which is so observable through the middle ages, and that the hope of preserving their secular aggrandizement by giving a perpetuity to the gloom of the popular mind, was a motive of no feeble influence on their conduct.—Berrington's Literary History, book iii.

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III.

derived wholly from its clergy, and principally from its monastic establishments. These were introduced by St. Augustine, the Anglo-Saxon apostle. Three centuries later, they were revived by Edgar and St. Dunstan, and subsequently they declined, and almost disappeared, amidst the ravages of the Danes.¹⁴ Lanfranc, who filled the see of Canterbury under the Conqueror, was revered by many of his contemporaries as "the father of the monks;" and to his zeal the nation was indebted for the good or evil connected with the restoration of their influence. On the accession of William the first, scarcely a fraternity had survived: but before the reign of John, five hundred monastic buildings were raised and peopled.¹⁵ By multiplying books, these institutions became to a high degree useful, and, by individuals among their votaries, some important benefits were conferred upon society. There are vices, however, to which the monastic system has ever, sooner or later, given an ascendancy, and these are not more obvious in the ecclesiastical history of other nations, than in the story of our own.¹⁶

Rise of the
Universities.

But when the means of instruction presented by the collegiate and conventual seminaries had nearly failed, the opulence which corrupted the teacher had inspired the pupil with a taste for improvement, and schools, instead of declining, became daily more numerous and efficient. In the twelfth century they were the boast of almost

¹⁴ Bede, *Hist.* i. c. 29. Cressy's *Church History*, xvii. c. 2. Eadmer, 4—10. Lanf. *Vita*. 8. Turner's *Hist. Anglo-Saxons*, book v. c. v. vi.

¹⁵ *Chron. Sax.* 1089. *Notitia Monastica*, Preface.

¹⁶ Bede's *Epistle to Egbert*, (261.) It must have been the evidence of no common depravity among the Anglo-Norman monks, which led Grossteste to describe them as belonging to the dead rather than the living, as the

tenants of a sepulchre appearing in the habiliments of the grave, and as deriving all their vitality from an infernal inspiration. See his language in Wycliffe's *Trialogus*, pp. 258—260. A work of Giraldus Cambriensis, called, "*Distinctionem Libri*," in the Cotton Library, (Tiberius, b. xiii.) includes a string of facts illustrative of monastic corruption, fully justifying the ardent censure of the "great clerk" of Lincoln.

every town and castle, and even of villages. It is true the pretensions of the greater number were limited to the humblest elements of knowledge, but others aspired to teach whatever the scholars of Oxford or Cambridge were supposed to learn. The former seminary was the principal scene of Wycliffe's labours, and the history of Oxford, from the middle of the fourteenth century to the era of the reformation, is intimately connected with that of his opinions. The university, which has given to that ancient town its importance, is attributed on probable evidence to the wisdom of Alfred. Under Edward the Confessor, it was a place of instruction, and one in which the logic of Aristotle and the rhetoric of Tully are said to have been taught; but its existence as a seat of learning for nearly a century after the conquest is doubtful. In 1086, it consisted of less than two hundred and fifty dwellings; in 1141, it was totally destroyed by fire; and in 1191, the greater portion of it was reduced to ashes by the same element. The houses, which had been hitherto raised with wood and merely thatched, were now built of stone and covered with tiles or lead. On this spot Vicarius commenced his lectures in civil law during the reign of Stephen, and the fame of his learning attracted students from Paris. A few years later, the pupils assembling in the schools of Oxford are described as amounting to four thousand. Long dispersed among the people, and subject to numerous impositions, in 1249 many of the students were for the first time assembled and provided for under one roof; and such was the success of this arrangement, that the principal establishments included in that seminary trace their origin to within a few years of this period; while its scholars are said to have increased to the number of thirty thousand.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ingulf, 514. Bruckeri Hist. Philos. lib. vii. c. iii. sect. i. Wood's History, i. Fleury, vi. 156—158; viii. 252. Hallam, ii. 571. Simultaneous

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State of
learning in
England in
the four-
teenth cen-
tury.

The state of learning in the fourteenth century is a subject of interesting inquiry, and as Wycliffe excelled in the studies which were then popular, a review of it is necessary to the complete exhibition of his character. In the ancient schools which we have briefly noticed, the sciences were divided into two classes; the *trivium*, comprehending grammar, rhetoric, and logic; and the *quadrivium*, including music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. But these liberal arts, as they were designated, were commonly taught from meagre abridgments, and, with the exception of grammar and logic, were in general but imperfectly understood. It was presumed, however, that every thing powerful in language, or secret in the laws of nature, must be disclosed to the student who should surpass his fellows in this circle of the sciences. Such was the result of those circumstances which doomed our ancestors to imbibe the infancy of their learning from the dotage of the Roman. Natural philosophy had been so often perverted to the cause of heresy or atheism, that it never became popular with the fathers of the church.¹⁸ Hence, through a series of centuries, the system of nature had nearly ceased to be the object of study; and even the small number of facts that were collected respecting it, during the middle ages, arose principally from the stimulus supplied by the dreams of the alchemist, or the kindred reveries of the astrologer.¹⁹ The venerable Bede, whose writings mainly contributed to preserve whatever knowledge was possessed from the fall of the empire to the revival of letters, explains the

with these advances of society in England, were those of the more considerable of the continental states.

¹⁸ Bruckeri Hist. Philos. lib. vi. c. ii. The mathematics had been so far connected with astrology, that to suppress the latter the study of the former was

prohibited to the clergy before the close of the fourth century, and in a council which Fleury describes as "reverenced by all antiquity," ii. 391.

¹⁹ De Rerum Natura, as cited by Edmund Burke. Abridgment of English History.

appearances of nature by matter and form; and by the four vulgar elements acted upon by the four supposed qualities of moist and dry, hot and cold. He knew enough of astronomy to explain the nature of an eclipse, but not sufficient to prevent his describing the moon as larger than the earth.²⁰ In the thirteenth century more attention was directed to this branch of knowledge, and with the most encouraging success. The illustrious friar Bacon, entertained the hope of discovering an elixir which should prolong the period of life, and transmute any metal into gold.²¹ Hence arose his zeal in the work of experiment, and thence resulted his profound and comprehensive acquaintance with the laws of the material world.²² Still he remarks, that arithmetic was rarely understood in his day beyond what was needful to the ordinary purposes of life; and he states with grief, that there were not more than five or six scholars in Europe, to whom the higher departments of the mathematics were known.²³ Rhetoric was more attentively studied. It had been commended with much eloquence by some of the more popular writers of the twelfth century; and in succeeding ages, it proved of far greater importance to the mendicant preachers, than the most critical acquaintance with languages generally unknown.²⁴ Another object to which the time of churchmen was devoted, to the neglect of better learning, was the study of music. Since the pontificate of Gregory the great, music had been numbered with the more important of the sciences; and such was the value attached to it as connected with religious worship, that honours rarely obtained by erudition were often freely bestowed on such of the clergy as excelled in this accomplishment.²⁵

SECT.
II.

²⁰ De Rerum Natura.

Hist. Oxford, i. 122.

²¹ Opus Majus, 472.

²⁴ Fleury, viii. 174, 175.

²² Fleury, viii. 192—202.

²⁵ Bruckeri Hist. Philos. lib. viii.

²³ Opus Majus, 57—138. Wood's c. ii. Fleury, viii. 317.

CHAP.
III.

But philology, in the ages referred to, was truly the handmaid of science, and the difficulties of the latter were surmounted but as a knowledge of the former was deemed of importance. By the clergy, the Latin was studied with an ardour hitherto unknown, and in the next century it was not only written with a purity and elegance which has been often praised, but was frequently adopted by ecclesiastics, as the vehicle of their colloquial intercourse.²⁶ History, however, has shown that the institutions and the dialect of our Saxon ancestors were too deeply fixed to be easily eradicated. In the age of Wycliffe, both had recovered a considerable share of their ancient authority. The speech of Normandy was less frequently heard, and the Latin, though still every where taught, had so far declined, that a violation of its most obvious rules was more than once gravely defended by Oxford professors.²⁷ While that language was successfully cultivated, individuals are discovered possessing some knowledge both of the Greek and of the Hebrew; but in the following century, it is lamented by the most learned man of the period, that with not more than three or four exceptions, the language of Greece, and oriental literature in general, had become wholly unknown in the west.²⁸ This low state of philology may be attributed in part to the mistaken judgment and false taste of the studious; and in part, to the debasing tendencies of the popular superstition—which had proceeded so far as to connect some mystic and forbidden purpose with the use of characters so strange, and so little intelligible. But a cause more powerful than either is obvious, in the distinction and emolument which were in general secured,

²⁶ *Anglia Sacra*. ii. 491, 497. P. Blesens. Opera, 262, also *Epist. ep.* 92. *Metal. lib.* ii. c. xiii. p. 759. *Bulæi Universitat.* Paris, ii. 556.

²⁷ *Wood's Hist. Oxford*, i. 125, 127.

²⁸ *Opus Majus*, 44—56.

by a skilful acquaintance with the divinity or dialectics of the schoolmen,²⁹ and of the canon and civil law.³⁰

SECT.
II.

The name, "schoolmen," had been derived from the ancient conventual seminaries already noticed. But the delusive tenet respecting the obscurity of the scriptures, which had been so conveniently urged by the priesthood to wrest them from the laity, was now directed with equal freedom against the body of the clergy, if untutored in the technicalities of heathen logic. Whatever learning might be possessed, if the dialectics of Aristotle were unknown, it was concluded that the true doctrine of St. Paul must continue a secret. This supremacy of the Stagyrite was not suddenly admitted; but in the twelfth century, his writings were better translated, and became more extensively known; and before the thirteenth had closed, we find his authority unrivalled. In the university of Paris, then the most distinguished in Europe, students were bound, even by oath, to defend the opinions of this infallible guide, and those also of certain among his commentators. While the scholastics of France boasted of their Abelard, or the Master of the Sentences, Italy was equally loud in her praises of Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, and equal honour was supposed to be conferred on the university of Oxford, by the names of Ockham, and Dun Scotus.³¹

Scholastic
philosophy,
and its
influence.

²⁹ Wood's Hist. Oxford, 127.

³⁰ Matt. Paris. We learn from this historian, that so early as the year 1251, the more successful students of civil law were rewarded with the dignity and all the privileges of knighthood. The practice extended until the various branches of learning were found to confer no less reputation than the profession of arms—an advance in humanity of the highest importance.

³¹ In noticing the rise of this disputatious spirit among the clergy, it is curious to remark, that the fathers,

whose authority was even yet unimpaired, commonly professed themselves the enemies of logic as a science, not unfrequently rejecting the established methods of reasoning, as opposed to the simplicity of the gospel. Aristotle was the special object of their abhorrence. Thus the great St. Ambrose recommends the most limited use of discussion in religion, viewing religious faith as deriving its efficacy from its connexion with the feelings, and from the supernatural aid of the Spirit. St. Basil proceeds so far as to style

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III.

If we reflect on the applause so widely conferred through nearly three centuries on the more celebrated schoolmen, and on their almost unexampled industry, as evinced by many a line of folios, the dust of which our own generation is rarely found to disturb; an inquiry as to the nature of a science which could attract such attention, and stimulate to such toil, will not be devoid of interest. The writings of Aristotle, which were constantly appealed to by these disputants, were his logic and his metaphysics. His productions on the former science were earlier known in the west than those on the latter, and were perhaps intended generally to precede them. Armed with these weapons, it became a great object with the scholastics to establish what are termed the principles of natural religion, by the force of abstract disquisition; and to this end it was deemed important to anticipate every conceivable objection. From this treacherous ground, they often passed to reason with all gravity on the substance, orders, or language of angelic natures, and on a multitude of themes even less promising. Betrayed occasionally into a similar freedom of discussion on the formal doctrine of the church, the censure of heresy was sometimes incurred; and a polemical warfare, in which the leading dissentients were supported by their numerous adherents, commonly ensued. There was nothing visible or invisible, nothing either known or supposed to exist, which the votaries of this science did not affect to class and define. But this ambitious range of topics, and particularly the inscrutable mystery of some, and the unmixed folly of others, must force a suspicion that something distinct from the discovery or the application of truth was the object frequently pursued.

reasoning "the devil's work," and to refute an opponent, decus it enough to describe his arguments as framed from the categories of Aristotle, de-

claring the wisdom of the world to be a faithless guide.—*De Fide*, lib. i. c. v. *Contra Eumon*. 17.

If we pass from the matters discussed by them to their method of disputing, it will be evident, that the general solicitude was to debate according to certain rules, and in the free use of endless technicalities; while victory, irrespective of truth or error, constituted the great point of ambition. The most simple questions appear to have been treated with a view to discover difficulties where they had never been suspected; others became popular, in proportion as their subtlety supplied a field for the display of ingenuity. Nor did the bosom of the chivalrous knight ever swell with more conscious pride over the fall of an antagonist, than was felt by these logical champions when their dexterities in a verbal conflict had secured them the honours of a triumph. Before the opening of the fourteenth century, it had passed into a maxim, that an adroitness in this intellectual manœuvring must precede all sublimity of conception in theology. Such as had practised this discipline with success, were honoured, in some instances, with appellations implying attributes more than human, and were often called to sustain the highest ecclesiastical dignities.³²

John of Salisbury, a prelate of the twelfth century, and a scholar of deserved celebrity, had devoted his youth to the study of Aristotle. Returning after many years of absence to the companions of his early days in the university of Paris, it is his statement that he found them precisely the same men, without having advanced a single step towards solving their old questions, or having added even the smallest proposition to the sum of their former knowledge.³³ That one race of men, should have been thus satisfied to become grey in mental activity, without in the least improving the stock of their wisdom, may be

³² Bruckeri Hist. Philos. lib. vii. c. iii. sect. 3. Hallam, ii. 572—580. There is something truly Quixotic in the knightly temper and martial diction

with which the famous Abelard describes his wordy achievements.—Robertson's Introduction, note.

³³ Metal. lib. i. c. ii. 3.

CHAP. III. reviewed with surprise; but this delusion extended to many generations. Nor was this total waste of energy the only result to be deplored. The scholastics were generally ignorant both of the language and the learning of Greece, and as a consequence, the principles of the Aristotelian philosophy were often but imperfectly understood by men who were loud in its praises. Judging of nature rather from the metaphysical abstractions of their author, than by way of experiment, the errors which followed were endless.³⁴

It is, however, on the subject of morals and religion, that the deficiencies of this class of men are most conspicuous, and most to be lamented. A barbarous mixture of superstition and mysticism, which Gregory the great had honoured with the name of a book of morals, was for nearly four centuries the most popular production on that science; and when superseded by the works of certain schoolmen, the change was not an improvement.³⁵ No obviousness of any truth, or duty, could secure it from perplexity, if subject to the review of these sceptical controversialists.³⁶ So far, indeed, was the system of Aristotle from aiding the cause of christianity, that it is known to have borne an unfavourable aspect with regard to natural religion; especially when accompanied with the commentaries of the famous Averroes. Disputes admitting of no termination must occasion perplexity; and it is stated by

³⁴ *Opus Majus*, 45.

³⁵ Bruckeri *Hist. Philos. lib. vii. c. ii. iii. sect. 2.*

³⁶ It was, for instance, laid down as an axiom, that whatever is pleasing to God is lawful. It was next made to appear as pleasing to God, that a youth of family should learn the sciences; but it was supposed, that this might not be done, without descending to theft for the means; and hence it was concluded, that there are cases in

which dishonesty may become lawful, and pleasing to God! When we discover men beguiling themselves with such miserable speculations, we are not surprised to learn, that the war of words sometimes proceeded to that of blows, nor that these harder encounters should be, in some instances, such as to call for the intervention of the civil authorities.—Bulæi *Hist. Universitat. Paris*, iv. 311. Cotton's *Abridgment*, 102.

authors who appear to be most worthy of credit on this subject, that the reasonings of modern infidels include scarcely any thing which may not be selected from the works of schoolmen.³⁷ The mind would, certainly, be exhausted of its patience, in contemplating the wayward exercise of power disclosed in the annals of these laborious triflers, did not the sepulchral stillness of preceding centuries render any movement welcome, as the possible symptom of returning life and consciousness; and did not history afford some proof of benefit, as resulting even from scholastic discussions.

It is admitted, that the logic so much admired by these debating fraternities included little more than a collection of terms. But the import of these was fixed with much precision, and, arranged into a system, they were intended as a guide to universal truth; nor would it be reasonable to suppose that no advantage, either immediate or remote, could result from the zeal so long evinced in the work of applying them. By such occupation, more of discipline must have been introduced into the exercise of the higher faculties; and it is obvious, that these move with efficiency but as accustomed to action. A greater attention was thus induced to the meaning of words, and hence ensued a more just conception of the power of language. We should remark also, that if these applauded rules of judgment, were in some instances so viciously employed as to serve the cause of a licentious infidelity, from this abuse incidentally arose their most important service to the world. By other minds, less degenerate, and equally powerful, the march of infidelity was perceived with alarm. Hence the treasures of divine revelation, and the works of its more enlightened defenders, were explored with a new interest; and from this cause it has followed that the views of religion most in harmony with its character in the

³⁷ Hallam, iii. 533.

CHAP. III. earlier ages of the church, are to be found at the period
 III. adverted to in the writings of schoolmen. With the study
 of school divinity we have noticed that of the civil and
 canon law as generally associated. We may also observe
 that the subtlety so far connected with the former, had
 become interwoven to almost an equal degree with the
 latter;³⁸ and as these sciences will be frequently named in
 the following Memoirs, the patience of the reader will, per-
 haps, allow me in a few words to explain the origin and
 character of each.

Civil law. Justinian ascended the throne of the empire in 528,
 and signalized the first year of his reign by requiring
 that a collection should be made of the most useful of the
 Roman laws. From that copious abridgment, extracted
 principally from the code of Theodosius, and from the
 earlier compilations of Gregorius and Hermogenes, a
 digest was afterwards formed, known by the name of the
Pandects; and the publication of these, consisting of
 fifty books, was preceded by that of an elementary treatise
 called the *Institutes*. The two last works, together
 with the *Novels*, or subsequent edicts of the same prince,
 included the system of jurisprudence which became so
 much an object of study and admiration in the twelfth
 century. From the fall of the empire the clergy had
 retained some knowledge of its secular laws, and often
 appealed to them; but the accidental discovery of a copy
 of the *Pandects*, in 1135, gave a new impulse to inquiry
 respecting the principles of Roman legislation. From
 that period to the age of Wycliffe, distinguished civilians
 might be found in all the principal cities; and universities
 began to consider their claims to this kind of learning as
 an important branch of their celebrity. In the seminary

³⁸ Blackstone, book iv. c. xxxiii. p. 410. Sir William Jones describes the science of pleading as "founded in the most exquisite logic," (Jones on

Bailments); and it is certain, that the sovereignty of Aristotle has been owned in the bar, scarcely less than in the pulpit.

at Boulogne, where law only was taught, the students, in 1262, amounted to ten thousand. The states of Europe had now passed from their infancy; their barbarian institutions were gradually departing; and they were no longer incapable of appreciating a code which had acquired its maturity among a civilized people, and which included perhaps as large a portion of equity as any which had hitherto existed. A system which is said to be reducible to the three principles,—that we should live honestly, injure no one, and pay all their due;—which is still ascendant, not only in Italy, but in such states as Germany and Scotland, and incorporated with more or less freedom in the polity of almost every nation of Europe, will not be speedily censured as of very humble merit.³⁹ It sanctioned the use of torture, and delivered its decisions on the evidence of two witnesses adduced by the plaintiff. These were its most objectionable features, and they were sufficient to justify the distrust of our ancestors, as to its infallibility, and left room for a stronger attachment to the laws of their country, in which no provisions were made for the extorting of evidence, and which secured to the defendant a less partial treatment, and a trial by jury.⁴⁰

The Canon law consists of the decisions of councils, and Canon law. of sentences from the fathers; of the decrees of pontiffs in their Italian synods, and of their decretals or official answers to questions on religion. Such are the materials of the three thousand capitularies, published by Gratian, a monk, in 1150; and esteemed through eight centuries as the most valuable depository of the canons of the church. The sacred writings were of course acknowledged as a principal source of legislative wisdom. These, however, were too commonly employed by the

³⁹ Horæ Juridicæ Subsecivæ, 82—
106. Blackstone's Introduction, sect. i.

⁴⁰ Fortescue's De Laudibus, with
Selden's notes, c. xix. xx. xxii. xxiii.

CHAP. canonist but to pervert judgment, and to serve the cause
 III. of a secular ambition. It was contended, that if the New Testament had contemplated subsequent changes in the state of the christian community, it certainly had not provided for them. This pernicious tenet it had become important, from the progress of error, at an early period to maintain. Once admitted also, it was argued, but too successfully, that the supposed deficiencies of that document were left to be supplied by the church, as represented in her sovereign and his court, or in general councils. With respect to the decree of Gratian, it will be sufficient to remark, that the most revolting pretensions of the popes were urged on that authority.⁴¹

But the code of the papal hierarchy is fast descending to its merited oblivion; and the better laws of Justinian are now known but as written wisdom, or as variously blended with the policy of modern nations. In favour of both, the ecclesiastical influence of this country was vigorously exerted through several centuries. But in the age of Wycliffe, the forms of feudal policy had begun to disappear; and the principles of our present legislation were becoming daily more systematic and cemented. Indeed, before the reign of William and Mary, there is no period in the annals of the English constitution which can prove more interesting to the lover of our rational liberties than that of Edward the third. The fixing of the court of common pleas at Westminster, in the reign of the third Henry, had led to the establishment of the inns of court, where our municipal laws, which the universities had determined to exclude, were long successfully studied. By Sir Edward Coke, that seminary is designated a third

⁴¹ *Horæ Juridicæ Subsecivæ*, 156, 168—171. Dupin's *Abridgment of Primitive Discipline*, cent. iii. 105. The work of Gratian is described by

Jortin as "full of ignorance and blunders," and as "magnifying the pope's authority beyond all bounds."—*Remarks*, iii. 316.

university, and at the commencement of the fourteenth century its students amounted to two thousand.⁴²

SECT.
II.

A summary
of the pre-
liminary
chapters.

It appears then, as the result of the facts adduced in these introductory chapters, that the papal system exhibits so great a corruption of the christian worship, polity, and doctrine, as to render the traces of their original purity, which are discoverable in Europe during the middle ages, but so many exceptions to the faith and customs which every where prevailed. It is conceded, that the hostilities directed against this vast usurpation may not always have originated in christian motives, nor have been always sustained by christian feeling; but that such was very frequently their character is certain. It has also appeared, that the means employed to crush such movements were, in general, truly worthy of the parties to whom we have to attribute so gross a perversion of the highest good conferred on man—being chiefly remarkable for their contempt of justice, honour, and humanity! In England, the most serious costs, and the worst disgrace, imposed on the nations by the papacy, were too long submitted to; and if the horrors of the Albigensian massacres were not reacted in her cities, it was, perhaps, chiefly because amid her various opposition to that lawless power, there was little, till toward the close of the fourteenth century, that could be branded with the name of heresy. We have also seen, that through nearly two centuries, prior to the appearance of Wycliffe, the crime of heresy had become so connected with the loathing, or the terror, of the popular mind, that amidst commercial enterprise, the partial revival of letters, and some advances in the science of government, the signs of a religious reformation, which had illumined a portion of the continent to the dawn of the twelfth century, were no more perceived. The power of

⁴² Blackstone's Introduction.

CHAP. the church had been wielded to intimidate ; and through
III.

nearly two hundred years its evil purpose had appeared to be nearly achieved. But in the mind of Wycliffe, the opinions which persecution had consigned to the most cautious secrecy were generously embraced. Even his labours may be described as premature ; but the shadowy interval, between his decease and the appearance of the great German reformer, passes away, like those mists which frequently linger for a while on the morning horizon, as if to heighten the contrast between the twilight and the day.

THE
LIFE OF WYCLIFFE.

THE
LIFE OF WYCLIFFE.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH OF WYCLIFFE; ITS DATE AND PLACE.—HIS JUVENILE HISTORY.—STUDIES OF YOUTH IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.—HIS CONNEXION WITH OXFORD.—HIS REMOVAL FROM QUEEN'S COLLEGE TO MERTON.—CHARACTER OF HIS STUDIES AT THIS PERIOD.—HIS ATTENTION TO THE CANON, CIVIL, AND MUNICIPAL LAWS.—HIS PROFICIENCY IN THE PHILOSOPHY AND EXERCISES OF THE SCHOOLMEN.—HIS VENERATION FOR THE SACRED WRITINGS, AND HIS TITLE AS "GOSPEL DOCTOR."—MUCH IN THE TIMES OPPOSED TO THE FORMATION OF HIS CHARACTER.—THE GREAT PESTILENCE.—WYCLIFFE'S FIRST TRACT, ENTITLED, "THE LAST AGE OF THE CHURCH"—DISCLOSES THE RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF HIS MIND IN THE THIRTY-SECOND YEAR OF HIS AGE.

THE year 1324, has been uniformly named by the biographers of John de Wycliffe, as the most probable period of his birth.¹ His appearance in Oxford as a student in the year 1340, would seem to preclude the mention of any later period, and is equally opposed to the adoption of an earlier date.² Seventeen years had then passed, since

CHAP.
I.
Birth of
Wycliffe;
its date and
place.

¹ Lewis, c. i. Baber, ii. Tanner, Bibliothec. Brit. 767.

² Among the youth, indeed, who are described as the scholars of the universities, in the middle ages, was a considerable number who were mere children. Thus the prince of Wales, afterwards Edward the fifth, and his brother the duke of York, are described as studying at Oxford, when the elder

had scarcely reached the tenth year of his age. Such juvenile pupils were received into the schools which Wood has called "Nurseries of Grammarians," until capable of ascending to "higher arts." Children, however, would not often be sent from distant parts of the kingdom to Oxford, merely to acquire what might be obtained with the same certainty in their

CHAP. I.
 the accession of Edward the second to the throne of England. The interval of three years, which closed the reign of that unfortunate prince, transferred his sceptre to the hand of his elder son and the bearer of his name.

The county of Durham, which, in the venerable Bede, produced the father of English learning, has been viewed as the birthplace of the man to whose character and efforts we are indebted in so great a measure for the English reformation.³ But on better authority, a humble village in a northern district of Yorkshire has the honour of Wycliffe's nativity.⁴ Judging from modern usages, we should readily suppose that the surname of Wycliffe was received from his parents; but our forefathers, until the Norman conquest, if not altogether unacquainted with such appellations, rarely adopted them. After that event, and to the beginning of the fourteenth century, they were

own neighbourhood. In the northern counties, especially, provision appears to have been made against this difficulty. Edward the first speaks of an establishment as existing in his time in one of the border districts, where two hundred young clerks were educating; and in some such establishment, the northern students generally proceeded so far as to appear at the universities qualified to enter on the studies more peculiar to those celebrated seats of learning. In addition to which, Wycliffe was certainly long enough in the north to have acquired a considerable portion of its dialect; and as there are no traces in his history of his ever returning to that part of the kingdom after his coming to Oxford, the fact suggests that his boyhood was

certainly passed near the place of his nativity.—Wood's Annals, i. 105—107. ii. 712—717. Collier's Ecclesiastical History, i. 497. Lord Littleton, Fuller, and some other historians have remarked, that the term school was synonymous in the middle ages with the term university; and it is certain that various of the provincial schools, both religious and secular, aspired to teach whatever was taught in the universities. But they were none of them chartered, and never became sufficiently important to be regarded as rivals either at Oxford or Cambridge.

³ Fuller's Worthies, Durham.

⁴ Leland's Itinerary, v. 99. "Wiclif, a meane Gentilman, dwelith at a litle Village caullid Wiclif." See Collectanea. tom. i. part ii. p. 329.

frequently attached to families, and, in numerous instances, were obviously derived from the place of their residence. In such cases, the parties were called by their baptismal name, and commonly said to be of the place, the designation of which is subsequently found inseparable from their signatures, as Simon de Montfort, and John de Wycliffe.⁵ The name of Wycliffe is certainly a local one. But in England, the only locality which has ever been so described, is a village about six miles from the town of Richmond, in Yorkshire; and that this spot, which still retains its ancient designation, was the home of Wycliffe's ancestors, is a conclusion supported by the strongest probable evidence. From the conquest to the year 1606, it was the residence of a family of the name of Wycliffe, who were lords of the manor of Wycliffe, and patrons of its rectory.⁶ At the latter period, the possessor of this ancient property lost his only son, and by the marriage of his daughter, his inheritance was transferred to a family of another name, but which has continued to be of importance in the neighbourhood. During the lifetime of our reformer, there were two rectors of Wycliffe, who bore his name; Robert, presented by Catherine, relict of Roger Wycliffe; and William, presented by John de Wycliffe. That the person, forming the principal subject of

⁵ Camden's Remains, 109. Lowth's Life of Wykeham, c. i. There is also an interesting paper on this subject in an early volume of the *Archæologia*.

⁶ For my information respecting the

parish, and family of Wycliffe, I am principally indebted to the present possessor of the rectory; though many of its particulars may be seen in Whitaker's *Richmondshire*, article Wycliffe.

CHAP. I. the ensuing chapters was of this family, has
 ——— always been the local tradition; nor has any anti-
 quarian industry been sufficient to ascertain the
 remotest intimation of a second family, as known
 in the district by the same appellation.

Doctor Zouch, in the notice attached to his portrait of Wycliffe, describes him, positively, as “a native of this parish.” To this respectable authority we may add that of Birkbeck, the author of a work entitled “The Protestant Evidence,” who officiated in the church of an adjoining parish during the reign of Charles the first.⁷ But the most decisive evidence of this kind is supplied by Leland. About a century and a half had passed since the decease of Wycliffe, when this distinguished antiquary, in noticing the parish of Wycliffe, describes it as the place in which Wycliffe the heretic was born.⁸ The only circumstance imparting the least uncertainty to this conclusion, is, that Leland, himself, has elsewhere given a somewhat different account. This fact, however, may be explained, so as to leave the birthplace of this extraordinary man exposed to no reasonable doubt. The author of the “Itinerary” travelled for much of his information, but his errors with respect to Richmondshire, render it certain, that he could not have visited the whole of that county. The name Spreswell, which is given by that writer to what he describes as a “poor village, a good mile from Richmond,” and

⁷ Ed. quarto, cent. xiv. p. 71.

⁸ Collectanea, tom. i. part ii. 329.
 In this place the notice of the village

of “Wigelif” is followed by the words, “unde Wigelif hereticus originem duxit.”

as the supposed place of Wycliffe's nativity, is one of which there is not the least trace in the history of the neighbourhood.⁹ That name, or one resembling it, may have been conferred on a solitary house, among the property of the Wycliffes,—whose possessions it is evident were extensive,—but as applied to a village, or hamlet, it has never been known in that portion of the kingdom. Nor are we obliged to regard the house so denominated, if such there was, as certainly within “a good mile of Richmond,” and as a consequence to acknowledge an incorrectness in describing the reformer as a native of the parish of Wycliffe. Such accuracy was not to be expected from a writer who, in the same work, states the rise of the Tees to be in a meadow near Caldwell, at least fifty miles from its real source. It is probable, that Leland's information in the two instances was obtained from different sources; the one statement referring perhaps to the family origin of the reformer, the other to the precise spot of his nativity. The latter circumstance may have been determined by accident. His allusion to Spreswell, therefore, should not be allowed to disturb the current of tradition in favour of the parish of Wycliffe, or his own more decided notice on that point; and this circumstance disposed of, there are few particulars of family history, in remote times, so certain as the birthplace of John de Wycliffe.

⁹ “There neither is now, nor was there ever, a place of that name in Richmondshire.” This is the statement of Dr. Whitaker; and is confirmed by the testimony of my esteemed correspondent the Rev. Mr. Raine—

a gentleman, whose judgment, on such a point, is with me decisive. The notice in Leland is as follows: “(They) say that John Wiclif Hereticus (was borne at Spreswel a good Myle from Richmont.)” *Itinerary*, v. 99.

CHAP.
I.

It has also been the local tradition, that the family referred to as possessing,—and which it appears alone possessed—the name of the reformer, is that from which he descended. To this opinion, it may be objected, that the name of Wycliffe occurs not in the existing records of that household. But this difficulty may be removed, by stating, that the members of the Wycliffe family continued the unaltered partisans of those debasing superstitions, which the zeal of John de Wycliffe was so rigorously devoted to annihilate.¹⁰ And we judge of that age, too much by impressions derived from our own, if we see not the conduct of such a man, as fraught, in the view of such connexions, with the worst infamy which could stain the annals of their race. If the blood of one traitor would be enough to destroy the pure line of ancestry; the man who was supposed to have received from the bosom of the church, all the virtues of her sacraments, and who is afterwards found denying her authority, affirming her spiritual head to be the predicted antichrist, and the great body of her ministers to be the servants of the Apocalyptic harlot, could hardly fail to be loathed as the most faithless of renegades. It is certain that, in many instances, to wipe off this family reproach, would be the object of no little solicitude. It is when he has proceeded thus far, that we find Wycliffe indulging in re-

¹⁰ The first paper, in the Appendix to this volume, is the copy of a will, by one of the Wycliffe family. It belongs to the year 1423, and is decisive as to the point referred to in the

text. For this document I am also indebted to the kindness of Mr. Raine, Librarian of the Dean and Chapter Library, Durham.

marks which disclose this state of contemporary ^{CHAP.} feeling; and which also admit of a more obvious _{I.} application to himself, than to any other man with whom the history of the age has made us acquainted. "There are three faults," he observes, "happening many times to wedded men and women. The first is, that they sorrow over their children, if they are naked or poor; but they reckon it as nothing, that they are unclothed with virtues in the soul. With much travail also, and cost, they get great riches, and estates, and benefices for their children, and often to their greater damnation; but they incline not to get for their children, the goods of grace, and of virtuous life. Nor will they suffer them to retain such goods, as they are freely proffered them of God; but hinder it as much as they may; saying, if a child yield himself to meekness and poverty, and flee covetousness and pride, from a dread of sin, and to please God,—that he shall never become a man, never cost them a penny; and they curse him, because he liveth well, and will teach other men the will of God to save their souls! For by so doing, the child getteth many enemies to his elders, and they say, *that he slandereth all their noble kindred, who were ever held true men, and worshipful!*"¹¹ Such, we may venture to conclude, was the language of relatives, as provoked by the pious zeal of the English reformer. The sum of our evidence, on these points, therefore, may be placed within a small compass.

¹¹ MS. "On Wedded Men and Wives, and their Children also." C. C. C. Cambridge.

CHAP. I. The surname of Wycliffe is unquestionably of local origin; and there is no locality in the kingdom, from which it could have been derived, beside that which is still so designated.¹² The only inference to be adopted, therefore, is, that the connexion of the reformer with the village of Wycliffe was, certainly, such as to induce himself, and his contemporaries, to regard it as the place

¹² Dr. Whitaker, indeed, (History of Richmondshire, article Wycliffe,) in opposition to every vestige of tradition on the subject, has attempted to render it probable, that Wycliffe derived his name from a place called Wittecliffe, which is somewhat nearer Richmond than the parish of Wycliffe; and has employed his ingenuity to discover some designation in the neighbourhood that may pass for the Spreswell of Leland. It would seem that our eloquent antiquary had not seen the statement of Leland in his Collectanea. I have examined his slender materials on this subject, and, in the language of the present rector of Wycliffe, must add, that I cannot see "the slightest foundation" for Dr. Whitaker's "fancy" respecting it. See vol. i. 197, 198. ii. 41, 42. It may be remarked also, that Wittecliffe, which is merely a tract of ground, so denominated from a white clift near it, has never been known as the name of any person, or family, in the neighbourhood; nor is there the least room to suppose, that it was the residence of any family, in the fourteenth century, sufficiently important to send its junior members to Oxford. Nor is it less worthy of observation, that when Leland, and others, insert the name of the reformer in Latin, they call him *Vico-clivus*, meaning the street or village near a precipice or clift—a description which is correct as applied to the parish of Wycliffe, but which

could never have been suggested by any thing in the neighbourhood of Wittecliffe.

The term "Wic" comes from a Saxon word signifying "to dwell," and "which, according to the different nature and condition of places, hath a threefold signification, implying either a borough, or a village, or a bay made by the winding banks of a river." Bailey, *verb.* In this sense the word describes the parish of Wycliffe most accurately, as it not only includes a "street" or village, but also winding waters rolling at the base of a clift. Neither of these allusions, however, would be correct as applied to Wittecliffe.

The name of Wycliffe is spelt with nearly twenty variations. By Mr. Lewis thus, "Wiclif;" and Mr. Baber, in following his example, observes, that it occurs in that form in the oldest document in which the name is known to appear,—meaning the paper referring to Wycliffe's embassy in 1374. But the prior documents, concerning the dispute respecting Canterbury hall, are of unquestionable authenticity, and in them, the name of Wycliffe often appears, and, in almost every instance, with a "y" in the first syllable, and a "ff" in the second. (see Appendix II.) Whether applied to the reformer, or to the village of Wycliffe, the orthography which I have adopted has, I conceive, the best pretensions to antiquity.

of his nativity. To the tradition, which has farther ^{CHAP.}
connected him with the family, to which the name _{I.} ———
of that village was particularly applied, there is nothing opposed, except the omission of his name in the archives adverted to. But this omission receives its explanation from the religious prejudices of the age; and moreover from the fact, that in the numerous Wycliffe manuscripts, which have descended to us, there is not the least allusion to any such relations, which is not in strict agreement with the supposition, that the case described by the reformer, in the preceding extract, was his own.

It is then in the highest degree probable, that the difficulty of placing Wycliffe's consanguinity with the patrons of the rectory of Wycliffe beyond all possible suspicion, has arisen entirely from the effort of his kinsmen, to save their descendants from bearing the reproach of his enormous heresy. That no traces of intercourse, between himself and his relatives, should be found in his writings, numerous and varied as they are, is a circumstance certainly conferring an additional evidence on this painful conclusion; and it is, also, due to his memory, to remark distinctly, that after the period of his minority, the aid which his character, and the fair exertion of his talents, might demand, would seem to have been his only dependence. In this state Providence has frequently placed the most highly gifted men; its temptations have been great as their capacities, and how few have passed the ordeal with honour!

CHAP. I. - It is among the privileges of our universities, to bestow appropriate distinctions on mental acquirement. The custom of conferring such honours is older than the days of Wycliffe;¹³ and being designed by his parents for the church, we learn, that his mind was early directed to such studies as were deemed preparatory to higher attainments in a national seminary.¹⁴ That nothing beyond this should be known, concerning the history of his youth, will hardly excite surprise, if it be remembered, that this is the amount of our information respecting the juvenile years of Knox,—a patriot advocate of piety, equally deserving the gratitude of his country, and whose less evil times are two centuries nearer to our own.¹⁵ The early life of distinguished men, like the first move toward the greatest revolutions, is often unnoticed by contemporaries, and hence unknown to posterity. When many causes have contributed to some momentous change, it may not be difficult to enumerate them, and to assign its portion of influence to each. But to observe similar events in their progress, and to predict their result; or to mark the openings of a superior mind, and to anticipate its history; requires a power of discernment rarely possessed. Had the disciples of Wycliffe, and the men of former ages in general, suspected that occurrences so familiar to them, were not only leading to important consequences, but might nevertheless become lost to their descendants, it would have been merely an

¹³ Dupin, cent. xiii. 155.

¹⁵ M'Cre's Life of Knox, i. c. i.

¹⁴ Lewis, c. i.

amusement to preserve, what the labours of the antiquary can never restore.

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I.

While, however, we are left to imagine the success which marked the attention of the youthful Wycliffe to the usual elements of learning; the character of the instructions, which the institutions of the fourteenth century presented, is sufficiently ascertained. At this period, the improving state of society had extended the means of education beyond the precincts of the cathedral, and the monastery. Not only in the larger cities, but in every borough and castle, schools are said to have been established.¹⁶ In these seminaries, the Latin language was taught with a zeal, somewhat proportioned to its importance, as the only key of knowledge. Thus initiated, the pupil passed to the study of certain approved works on grammar, rhetoric, and logic; also on music, arithmetic,

Studies of
youth in the
fourteenth
century.

¹⁶ Baconi Opus Majus, Prefat. Robertson's View of Society, sect. i. Henry's History of England, vi. 195—198. Hallam, ii. 24—29. Besides a school in the abbey at St. Alban's, in which every branch of knowledge then cultivated was taught, there was one in the same town under Matthew, a physician, and Garinus, his kinsman; and the latter person was much celebrated for his knowledge of the canon and civil law. The praise bestowed by Matthew Paris on this academy, implies that there were many such in the kingdom.—Vit. Abbat. St. Alban. p. 62. col. i. It has appeared from the researches of Tanner, that five hundred religious houses had risen in England during the interval from the conquest to the reign of John. To those houses schools were generally annexed. And

it is evident, that so early as the year 1138, the school system, as a matter distinct from the monastic establishments, had extended itself from towns to villages.—Notitia Monastica, Preface. No person, however, could act in the capacity of schoolmaster, until licensed by an appointed clergyman; and the priesthood, whether from jealousy, or avarice, were often so merciless in their exactions, as at length to provoke the intervention of authority.—Brompton Chron. 1348. Henry, vi. 162—167. In a general council held in the Lateran church at Rome, in 1179, and in another convened at Paris, in 1212, all exactions for licences to teach as schoolmasters were prohibited.—Hoveden, 589. Dapin, cent. xiii. 92.

CHAP. geometry, and astronomy. These sciences, which,
 I. — it will be observed, were seven in number, were thought to be so explained, as to include within their mystic circle whatever was deemed important, or even possible, to be known. But a knowledge of grammar was usually the extent of the learning acquired in these provincial institutions; the more complete study of rhetoric and logic, and of the various departments of natural philosophy, being generally reserved for the advanced scholarship of university students.

His connexion with Oxford.

Having passed through this preparatory discipline, it remained for Wycliffe, or his connexions, to determine whether Oxford or Cambridge should be the place of his future studies, and the former it appears was preferred. In that university, Wycliffe is first known as a commoner in Queen's college, a seminary founded in the year 1340, and which has numbered our reformer with its earliest members. The establishment in which he thus commenced his maturer studies, had risen, in part, from the munificence of Philippa, the queen of Edward the third; but still more from the laudable zeal of Sir Robert Eglesfield, her chaplain. This clergyman was a native of Cumberland, and the college formed by his influence was intended, chiefly for the benefit of students from the northern counties—a circumstance, which may account for its being chosen by a youth from the borders of Westmoreland and Durham. But the infancy of such institutions is inseparable from many disadvantages, and such as must be deeply felt by a mind ardent in its pursuit of knowledge. Wycliffe had not yet

passed the seventeenth year of his age,¹⁷ but it is fair to suppose that this feature was already conspicuous in his character; and his dissatisfaction may be inferred from his speedy removal to Merton, a college in the same university, but founded in the preceding century. At this period, the name of Merton was the most distinguished in Oxford. It had produced some of the most scientific scholars of the age; had supplied the English church with three metropolitans; its divinity chair had been recently filled by the celebrated Bradwardine; and within its walls, Ockham and Duns Scotus had disclosed that genius, the fame of which was at this time commensurate with Christendom, and was believed to be immortal.¹⁸

While we regard Wycliffe, as engaged in those grammatical studies to which the years of boy-

CHAP.
I.

His removal
from
Queen's
college to
Merton.

Character of
his studies
at this pe-
riod.

¹⁷ The reader will observe that Queen's college was founded in 1240; and if we suppose Wycliffe to have been born in 1324, he could not have been under sixteen at this time. His name, however, occurs in the list of the first students of that seminary.

¹⁸ Hist. Oxford, lib. ii. 89. 113. Lewis, c. i. The last writer has mentioned Ockham, as a student of Merton. Brucker affirms the same of Duns Scotus.—Hist. Philos. iii. 826. Brucker has supplied his readers with a specimen of the chastened manner in which Scotus was eulogized by his followers, (828). Had the genius of Aristotle been unknown, Scotus, it is said, could have supplied his place. His arrival at truth was rather with the readiness and certainty of intuition, than by the doubtful process common to other minds. The divine attributes he describes as one descending immediately from the presence of Deity; and

the nature of angels, as though it were his own. The mysteries of Providence he explained as if apprised of all its secrecies, and the felicities of heaven as if the element of his being. It is not surprising that such a man is described as the "Immortal Scotus," and as the most ingenious and powerful of the sons of men. But his contemporary Ockham lived to better purpose. It was his lot to doubt the infallibility of pope John the twenty-second. This circumstance obliged him to seek the protection of Lewis of Bavaria, emperor of Germany, and his publications in defence of the civil power, as independent of the ecclesiastical, if unfriendly to his repose, were not so to his fame. One of his compositions is praised by Selden, as "the very best performance published concerning the limits of the spiritual and temporal powers."—De Synedriis, lib. i. c. 10. p. 228.

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hood are commonly devoted, Oxford appears as the residence of thirty thousand students. Previous to his appearance there as probationer of Merton, this number, from causes which will be explained, was greatly reduced. His connexion, however, with the most distinguished scholars of a seminary yielding only to the university of Paris in its fame, could hardly fail to diffuse the most important influence over his mind, remarkable as it appears to have been for its thirst of knowledge, and the capacity of acquiring it. Without wholly neglecting any of the more important branches of science, the studies of Wycliffe were evidently regulated by a conscientious regard to such qualifications as were demanded by the solemn office which he was about to assume. In the received doctrines on natural philosophy, he in consequence felt but a partial interest. It was sufficient, however, to induce that attention to them, which rendered him, in some instances, sceptical, where less thoughtful inquirers had relinquished suspicion. That he was perfectly familiar with the rules of rhetoric, then so sedulously taught, is certain, from his known acquaintance with authors who had treated on them, and with others in whose style they were most laboriously exemplified. His own writings, however, betray rarely the appearance of art. It is plain, that his mind when approaching any question connected with piety, was generally too much occupied with the error to be eradicated, or the truth to be established, to admit of any material solicitude respecting the cadence or the niceties of

language. Hence, most of his works bear the marks of hurried composition; but are at the same time distinguished by that free use of vernacular terms, that reiteration of important sentiment, and that general obviousness and strength of expression, which gave them the charm of novelty, and an efficiency to shake the faith and customs of a nation. It may be safely affirmed, that his writings contributed, far more than those of any other man, to form and invigorate the dialect of his country.¹⁹ But this effect, though important, was of subordinate interest in the mind of Wycliffe, and was among other benefits which arose, incidentally, from that ardour with respect to the best interests of his countrymen which his religious opinions had excited, and which he knew could prove subservient to the popular welfare, but through the medium of the popular language. Had our reformer written elegant Latin, or possessed any considerable acquaintance with Greek, it would have been to surpass his contemporaries in literature, scarcely less than in his views of the religion of the Bible. In the west, at this period, the language of Greece may be considered as unknown; and that of Rome was no where written in its purity.²⁰ Terms, and phrases, derived from the former, are of frequent occurrence in Wycliffe's more learned productions; the latter he wrote with fluency, and with as much correctness and purity as the taste of the age had judged to be important. A very imperfect acquaintance

¹⁹ Hallam, ii. 607.

²⁰ Baconi Opus Majus, 41—56. History of Oxford, lib. i. 125.

CHAP. with this language, was the only attainment in
I. ——— philology required at that period from candidates for the clerical office.

His attention to the canon, civil, and municipal laws.

With this study, however, that of the civil and canon law, and that of divinity as taught by the schoolmen, had long been associated. By Wycliffe, these branches of knowledge were closely investigated. But with the laws of the empire, and of the church, he united those of England, as not less deserving his attention;²¹ and his information relating to each, was soon to be effectively employed in the cause of national freedom, and of a purer christianity. The canons of the church were collected, principally, from the decrees of councils, and of pontiffs; and formed an authority, not purely ecclesiastical, but one by which a multitude of causes, once pertaining solely to the magistrate, were at length attached to the exclusive jurisdiction of the christian pastor. Hence a spirit of rivalry arose between the courts of princes and those of the bishops, and such as in time rendered it a proverb, that to excel as a canonist, required the learning of a civilian, the latter word being understood to denote the secular law, as distinguished from the ecclesiastical. There were numerous provincial and national customs opposed to that imperial system of legislation which had disappeared with the fall of the empire; and to that dominion of canonical law which churchmen had reared upon its ruins.²² This was considerably the case in England, and it ought not perhaps to

²¹ Lewis, c. i.

²² Gibbon, iii. 293—298. Preliminary View, c. i. sect. i. c. iii. sect. i.

excite surprise, that the ambition, aided by the pedantry, of the times, should be found struggling to exclude the native jurisprudence from the class of liberal studies.²³ But it appears that Wycliffe was not to be thus deterred from ascertaining the merit of customs which had descended with the generations of his father-land, nor at length from preferring them openly, to the collections of Gratian, or the laws of the Empire.

Conforming to usages, which the practice of more than two centuries had contributed to establish, he also became early devoted to the study of scholastic theology, and here also was soon distinguished by his acquirements and his skill. Among schoolmen, Aristotle was revered as the only safe guide to the meaning of St. Paul. Aided by the logic and metaphysics of their master, there was nothing either known, or supposed to have being, which these disputants did not attempt to describe and analyze. No truth was thought to be established, until the errors opposed to it had been formally assailed; and extemporaneous debate on the questions of nature and law, of morals and religion, conducted with the forms and technicalities prescribed by the Stagyr-ite, was an employment to which the most cultivated minds addressed their whole capacity, and in which to excel, was to afford the most unquestionable evidence of extraordinary genius. These discussions became to the inmates of colleges, what the tournament had long been to the knight and the baron; and, too frequently, had

His proficiency in the philosophy and exercises of the schoolmen.

²³ Blackstone's Commentaries, Introduction.

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— about as little connexion with a spirit of devotion, or an improvement of morals. It must at the same time be conceded, that these debates were not without their use; and that Wycliffe should begin his career, by treading in the steps of men who were honoured as the luminaries of their time, can hardly excite surprise, or merit reproof. The study of Aristotle as the only certain preceptor of truth, in revealed theology, in the duties of life, and in the system of nature, was alone dignified with the name of philosophy; and that our reformer knew no superior in the difficulties of this science, is manifest, both from the plaudits of partisans, and the concessions of opponents, who were alike his contemporaries. Scholastic exercises, or the public disputations already noticed, were regarded, and not altogether without reason, as subjecting every pretension to mental superiority to the most unequivocal test. The ever changing aspect of these discussions, demanded a readiness of perception, an extent of knowledge, and a facility of communication, which left no room for the triumphs of the feeble. To state, that in such contests, John de Wycliffe was unrivalled, would be to adopt the language of praise, but a language colder than that which his genius extorted from one of the most relentless of his foes, who affirms his powers of debate to have been almost more than human.²⁴ This

²⁴ Leland de Script. Brit. 379. Henry Knighton, de Eventibus Angliæ, col. 2611. Knighton is an historian whose name will frequently appear in these pages. He was a

canon of Leicester, and contemporary with Wycliffe. His work commences with some brief notices of Anglo-Saxon history: his story from the conquest is an acknowledged transcript of Ralph

proficiency in a science having respect to such a diversity of objects, and burdened with so frightful a nomenclature, supposes ardent application, and a conviction of its general usefulness. While, however, it would have been indeed surprising, if Wycliffe had not imbibed the sentiment of the age, respecting the importance of this philosophy, it was almost impossible that such a mind should have become so completely versed in its principles, without some misgivings as to the justice of its vast pretensions.

It is at the same time due to its votaries to state, that in the writings of schoolmen, where there is so much that is sceptical in its tendency, and so much that is useless or puerile, the truths of the gospel are not unfrequently to be discovered—and that they are sometimes exhibited there with a degree of correctness, and marked by a purity of application, which would have done honour to the men of any later period.²⁵ That the mind of Wycliffe derived a portion of its light from this source, is certain; and it is equally evident, that there were instances in which others

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I.

His veneration for the sacred writings and his title as "Gospel Doctor."

Higden, leaving his narrative of contemporary events as alone valuable. His hatred of our reformer, and of his followers, is constantly manifest. It is Knighton, however, who describes the disciples of Wycliffe, as equally distinguished by their industry in acquiring scriptural knowledge, and their adroitness in using it, and who is constrained to speak in the following terms of their master's capacity and acquirements.—"Doctor in Theologia eminentissimus in diebus illis. In philosophia nulli reputabatur secundus; in scholasticis disciplinis incom-

parabilis. Hic maxime nitebatur aliorum ingenia subtilitate scientiæ et profunditate ingenii sui transcendere, et ab opinionibus eorum variare."—Ibid.

²⁵ In this class Bradwardine, already noticed as the "profound Doctor," holds a distinguished place, as does Peter Lombard. Anselm has been described as the father of the scholastic philosophy; and we have no writer surpassing him in scriptural knowledge, and but few approaching him in warmth of devotion before the age of Wycliffe.—See Prelim. View, c. iii. sect. i.

CHAP. I. were thus prepared to receive his more peculiar doctrine. From his writings we learn, that he never wholly abandoned the scholastic topics of discussion, nor its methods of reasoning.²⁶ From the same source, however, we also learn, that in the art of wisely separating the precious from the vile, he far surpassed the most enlightened of his countrymen. To remove the errors, which treachery, or ignorance, has been long employed in interweaving with the truth, and to preserve the latter uninjured, must ever be a work of difficulty. In the age of Wycliffe, when the false had acquired so complete an ascendancy over the true, it was a task of imminent peril. His ardent attachment to the sacred scriptures, which at length procured him the appellation of the "Gospel Doctor," could not have been disclosed without considerable hazard to his reputation as a scholar. For such was the prevailing contempt of the sacred writings, or the mistakes of men, induced by the papal doctrine of infallibility, as to the uses to which the scriptures should be applied, that an adherence to that volume, even as a text book, was sufficient to induce the leading universities of Europe to exclude such offenders from their walls. Friar Bacon, and Grossteste the celebrated bishop of Lincoln, honoured the cause of these persecuted teachers with their pleadings; but their arguments, and

²⁶ A glance at the table of contents prefixed to his *Triologus*, is alone sufficient to demonstrate this; and it will presently appear, that the want of attention to this fact has led to much erroneous judgment respecting some parts of the conduct of Wycliffe. (See Chapter on his writings). We are

informed that there is still a richly endowed college at Seville, where certain Dominicans continue to lecture on Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. But the pupils are few; and even in Spain this species of instruction is discouraged by the government.

their influence, were put forth in vain.²⁷ In the age of our reformer, men may have begun to discover, that their “seraphic” instructors, in promising them wisdom, had pledged themselves for more than was performed. But it yet seemed to require the whole of Wycliffe’s acknowledged talent, to give popularity to the exploded custom of lecturing on morals and divinity from the pages of holy writ. The charge of ignorance, or of incapacity, as preferred against him, was known to be useless; accordingly, his opponents invariably accuse him of design rather than of weakness.

Dr. Lowth has described William of Wykeham, as capable of seizing on the highest honours of the scholastics, but supposes that his attachment to such studies—as the almost inevitable consequence of a university education—would have deprived the world of his character as a statesman, and as the patron of learning.²⁸ If this

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I.

Much in the times opposed to the formation of his character.

²⁷ Lewis, c. i. History of Oxford, lib. i. 53, 92, 94. Father Paul’s Council of Trent, lib. ii. ubi supra.

²⁸ Life of Wykeham, sect. i. The following is Mosheim’s account of the *Biblicists* of the thirteenth century: “The method of investigating divine truth by reason and philosophy prevailed so universally, and was followed with such ardour, that the number of those who, in conformity with the example of the ancient doctors, drew their systems of theology from the holy scriptures, and the writings of the fathers, and who acquired on that account the name of *biblicists*, diminished from day to day. It is true, indeed, that several persons of eminent piety, and even some of the Roman pontiffs, exhorted with great seriousness and warmth, the scholastic divines, and

more especially those of the university of Paris, to change their method of teaching theology, and laying aside their philosophical abstraction and subtilty, to deduce the sublime science of salvation from the holy scriptures, with that purity and simplicity with which it was there delivered by the inspired writers. But these admonitions and exhortations were without effect; the evil was become too inveterate to admit of a remedy, and the passion for logic and metaphysics was grown so universal and so violent, that neither remonstrances nor arguments could check its presumption or allay its ardour.”—Hist. iii. 249, 250. To the last statement a material exception is supplied by the labours of Wycliffe, at Oxford.

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I.
— observation be well founded, it is worthy of remark, that it is as the resident of a university in the fourteenth century, and while forcibly attracted by pursuits deemed so unfriendly to a life of useful activity, that our patriarch reformer becomes the means of conveying to his country and to Christendom benefits of unrivalled worth. It will be admitted, that had such studies been found completely to subdue all those stronger passions which were so essential to the character he was destined to assume, the effect would have been without novelty: and when we see his faculties thus surrendered to the cold occupation of legal inquiries, and to that world of subtle questions which had been created by the schoolmen, it may well excite surprise, that the effect anticipated in the case of William of Wykeham, did not follow in that of John of Wycliffe. But a complete knowledge of the ground, and tactics, of the enemy, was not to be obtained at less hazard, or at less cost; and how far such pursuits were to contribute in the history of our reformer, to unite serenity with ardour, and profound caution with daring enterprise, the remaining facts of this narrative will disclose.

The great
pestilence.

The years of his minority had scarcely terminated, when the nations of Europe became agitated by one of those afflictive visitations, which the conscience of mankind has ever connected with the peculiar displeasure of the Almighty. It could hardly have passed before the eye of Wycliffe, without affecting his religious sympathies; and its influence on the moral and religious

feeling of his country was extended and deplorable. It was in the year 1345, that a pestilence, the most destructive in the annals of the world, appeared in Tartary. Having ravaged various kingdoms of Asia, it hovered about the Delta and the shores of the Nile; was wafted thence to the islands of Greece; passing along the shores of the Mediterranean, it filled the several states of Italy with impartial ruin; and crossing the Alps, penetrated into nearly every recess of the European population. Two years had been occupied in its desolating progress, when the continent was shaken from its centre to its borders by a succession of earthquakes. From June to December, in the same year, England was deluged with incessant rains: in the following August, the plague appeared at Dorchester: it soon reached the metropolis, and there, in the space of a few months, added many thousands to its victims. The infected generally perished within a few hours: the strongest failed after the second or third day. Wycliffe was now in the twenty-fifth year of his age. He saw the distemper passing from men to the brute creation, covering the land with putrid flesh; the labours of husbandry suspended; the courts of justice closed; the timid resorting to every device of superstition for security, and perishing around him, sometimes buoyant with delusion, and sometimes frenzied by despair. He no doubt discarded the rumour which affirmed that a tenth only of the human family had been spared. But he may have listened to the less credulous, when stating it as probable, that the

CHAP. earth had lost full half its population. It is cer-
I. ——— tain, that enough would be seen by him, and ad-
mitted on unquestionable evidence, to render the
calamity truly alarming; and from his frequent
references to it, in after life, we learn that its im-
pression on his mind was not to be effaced.

He had probably anticipated a diffusion of more
sincere piety, both among the clergy and the laity,
as the result of a visitation so fearful. But he
lived to see, and on a scale awfully extended,
that the depravity which is not subdued by un-
usual suffering, must acquire a more hopeless
hardihood from the resisting process through
which it has passed. In the contempt frequently
discovered by the physician, and the priest, as to
their respective obligations; in the remorseless
plundering of depopulated dwellings; in the
desertion of the husband by the wife, and even
of children by their parents, he was called to
witness, at an early period, the unveiled selfish-
ness of the human heart. The infection had not
spared the opulent, but had raged with more de-
structive fury among the poor. With neither,
however, did it produce the signs of penitence.
It was while nearly every house in the metropolis
was a house of mourning, while many were wholly
unpeopled, and parliament, in consequence of the
malady, had been repeatedly prorogued, that
Edward the third assembled the gaiety of his
court to witness his institution of the "Order of
the Garter." And no sooner had the distemper
subsided, than the extent of its ravages among the
labouring classes, and its inefficacy, as the means

of correcting the excesses of earthly passions, were every where felt. The most exorbitant wages were demanded for performing the humblest duties of agriculture, amounting, in some instances, to a ten-fold increase; and in spite of various measures, and even of royal proclamations, intended to check the growing cupidity, the conditions of service insisted on were generally secured. The clergy, removed by the calamity which gave such prominence to these unpleasing features of human nature, were those, it may be presumed, who had been most devoted to the interests of their flock. It is known, that their place was supplied by men, who were in general grossly incompetent to the duties of any spiritual office; and that in society, the evils ever resulting from a vicious and defective ministry became increasingly evident.²⁹

By this alarming event, viewed as the chastisement of unusual guilt, and followed by these foreboding appearances, the mind of Wycliffe was

Wycliffe's first tract, "The Last Age of the Church."

²⁹ Knighton, col. 2599. 2601. Walsingham, Hist. 198. Rot. Parl. ii. 234. Rymer, v. 655. 658. 693. Maitland's History of London, book i. c. 2. Barne's Edward the Third, book ii. c. 8. Ashmole's Appendix. Walsingham mentions it as a prevalent opinion, that not more than a tenth person had survived, but supposes himself that one half escaped. The number of interments which took place in the spot now called the Charter House, as recorded on a monument which long stood there, warrants the conclusion that a hundred thousand of the then population of London was swept away.

The spirit of extortion in the labouring classes, which required the interposition of the government, extended to the inferior clergy, and in 1362, provoked the rebuke of Archbishop Islep, who required "that no rector should give, and that no curate should receive, more than one mark above what had been yearly given for the same services *before the plague.*" —Johnson's Canons, A. D. 1362. For an account of this pestilence, as affecting the continental states, see Gio Villani Chron. lib. xii. cap. 83. Matteo Villani, lib. i. cap. 4. Also, Il Decamerone præmio.

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I. — indeed so deeply affected, that he began to yield to the popular apprehension respecting the near approach of the final judgment. This conviction, which greatly influenced his devotional feeling, produced his first publication—a small treatise entitled, “The Last Age of the Church.” It appeared in 1356, the thirty-second year of his age.³⁰ Nor is the English reformer the only distinguished man in whose history erroneous impressions have been allowed to facilitate the most important results. Such, indeed, is the mixture of truth and error in the present world, and such are the benevolent arrangements of Providence, that it would not be easy to select a character of eminence, in which there should be no valuable attainment to be traced to the operations of very imperfect truth, or even in a very considerable measure to delusive calculations. When the new creation is completed, the light which is now seen to be good, will be wholly divided from the darkness; but during the progress of this separation, the errors of men will be so commonly impregnated with their opposites, that both will frequently appear to be laid under the same contribution.

This is strikingly evident, in the history of a race of visionaries, who rose in succession during

³⁰ Mr. Lewis has not given any account of the contents of this MS., or of the circumstances which called it forth, except that it was a tract directed against “the covetous exactions of the popes:” and a few lines are quoted to shew the vengeance which the writer expected God would some day bring upon those who were guilty of such

practices. (p. 3.) But the document is by no means of the character which Mr. Lewis’s notice of it would lead the reader to suppose. It contains no such allusion to the popes. It relates to the general corruption of the ecclesiastical system, as resulting from simony, and other causes, and, as will be seen, contains matters affording

the middle ages, claiming the gift of inspiration ; and who, while adhering to the communion of the church, censured aloud the corruption of its ministers, predicting with fearlessness, either the reform or the destruction of the hierarchy. These privileged persons, who were of both sexes, and from every rank among the clergy, were generally the object of the utmost veneration with the populace ; and as the gift of miracles was usually found to accompany that of prophecy, interest or credulity frequently led the most dignified churchmen, and even the pontiffs themselves, to become abettors of the popular delusion. The calamities which had recently desolated the states of Europe, had so far disturbed the feelings of men, as to clothe these dreams about the future with a new attraction. From "The Last Age of the Church," it is evident that Wycliffe, though young, had already learned to deplore the gross corruptions of the ecclesiastical system ; and there was a truth and intrepidity in the general censures of the persons adverted to, which must have appeared, to such a mind, as strictly necessary to check the torrent of abuses, and to

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some curious and valuable illustration as to the state of the reformer's mind at this early period. My predecessor's deficiencies in this instance are of course to be traced to the defective information supplied by his Dublin correspondent. Note to the second edition.

Mr. Lewis has also failed to adduce any reason for assigning so early a date to this production. This point, however, is unquestionable. "Thirteen hundred years, and six and fifty," are

stated by the writer as the interval "from Christ until now." It is the date of this document, chiefly, that renders its information valuable. It is one of the reformer's pieces which is to be found only in the library of Trinity college, Dublin. — Class c. tab. 3. No. 12. From the obscurity of several of its parts I am inclined to think that the existing MS. has been transcribed from some illegible or imperfect copy.

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— restore the departed purity of religion. In this school of prophets, the most honourable place should perhaps be assigned to the abbot Joachim,—an Italian ecclesiastic, whose fame attracted the favourable notice of Richard Cœur de Leon, when embarked in his first crusade; and whose predictions respecting the enthronement of Antichrist, in the ancient capital of the empire, might well have excited the alarm of contemporary pontiffs.³¹ With this seer, and with others, who could boast of similar visions, as his guides, Wycliffe arrives at the conclusion, that the close of the fourteenth century will be that of the world. He observes, that in stating, that four great tribulations were to come upon the church, in the interval between the advent

³¹ The following is an extract from the prophecies of Joachim, which is annexed to Bale's Chronicle of the examination of Sir John Oldcastle. "In the latter days shall appear a law of liberty. The gospel of the kingdom of Christ shall be taught, and the church shall be purged as wheat is from chaff and tares. More cheerily shall men then be learned. The kingdom of the flesh shall be done away, and these things shall be fulfilled toward the end of the world. The Holy Ghost shall more perfectly exercise his dominion in converting people by the preachers of the latter time, than by the apostles. The church of Rome is the fleshly synagogue of Satan. The church of Rome shall be destroyed in the third state, as the synagogue of the Jews was destroyed in the second state. And a spiritual church shall, from thenceforth, succeed to the end of the world. The depart-

ing of the Greeks from the church of Rome was godly, for it was ordained of God, and wrought by the Holy Ghost." The following is the title of a book in my possession, the contents of which are often less coherent than the above anticipations of Joachim. "Admirable and Notable Prophecies, uttered by Twenty-four famous Roman Catholics, concerning the Church of Rome's Defection, Tribulation, and Reformation, 1615." In this work a conspicuous place is allotted to the Abbot Joachim, and the prophetess Hildegrass. The latter not only echoed the general predictions of Joachim, but became a favourite with Wycliffe, Huss, and many of the early reformers, from the distinctness with which she was supposed to have foretold the introduction, and the evil deeds of the mendicants.—See Fox's Acts and Monuments, i. 600, 601.

of Christ and the end of the christian economy, the modern prophet is assuredly supported by king David, by the venerable Bede, and St. Bernard. The first of these tribulations is described as taking place when the church was assailed by heathen persecution; the second, when the hostilities of heathenism were succeeded by the allurements of heresy. But the last is said to have been "put off by the wisdom of saints, as the "first was overcome by the stedfastness of martyrs." The third and fourth of these general calamities are viewed as belonging to the fourteenth century, the one arising "from the secret "heresy of simonists," the other including the triumphs of Antichrist, the exact "period of whose "approach God only knoweth."

The modern reader will probably smile at these speculations, and it is no less probable that some future race will look with equal self-complacency on many of his own gravest calculations with regard to the future. It is worthy of observation, that while the writers who record the sufferings of the period under review, attribute them principally to the vanity of the people, especially as evinced in the costly caprice of their apparel, and the general disposition to luxurious indulgence; Wycliffe traces the malady to a higher source, describing the clergy as so addicted to covetousness, sensuality, and fraud, as to have infected every portion of the community with these vices, and as being in consequence the main cause of that chastisement under which Europe

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 I. — reformer frequently adverts to the conduct of
 the Saviour in commencing his miraculous deeds
 at Jerusalem by purifying the temple—noticing
 the fact, as plainly suggesting, that the root of
 Judah's defection was to be sought in the cha-
 racter of her priesthood; and as teaching, that
 the worldliness of priests, which could allow the
 sanctuary itself to become a place of merchandise,
 was the source of every other degeneracy.³² It is
 evident, that in the judgment of Wycliffe,—though
 time had not yet matured his opinions,—church-
 men had but too generally *become* what the Jewish
 priesthood *were* at the time of the advent. In the
 language of St. Gregory, and other venerated
 persons, he describes “the pestilent smiting to-
 gether of people and hurling together of realms,
 “and other harms, which should come to the earth,
 “because the honours of holy church are given to
 “unworthy men;” stating also, that “this mischief
 “shall be so heavy, that well will it be for that
 “man who shall not then be alive.” The writers
 whom he had consulted, as treating of the times to
 come, are said to agree in affirming, “that death,
 “vengeance of sword, and mischiefs unknown
 “before, by which men in those days shall be pu-
 “nished, shall befall them, because of the sins of
 “priests. Hence, men shall fall upon them, and
 “cast them out of their fat benefices; and shall
 “say, He came into his benefice by his kindred,

³² MS. C. C. C. C. On Prelates, c. i.
 iv. “As virtues in priests quicken the
 “church, sin and vices in them make

“the church venomous.”—MS. on the
 Seven Deadly Sins. Bibl. Bodl.

“and this by a covenant made before; he, for his
 “worldly service came into God’s church, and this
 “for money. Then every such priest shall cry,
 “Alas! alas! that no good spirit dwelt with me at
 “my coming into the church of God!” Thus he
 again asserts, “men of holy church shall be de-
 “spised as carrion, as dogs shall they be cast out
 “in open places!” The devout, however, are
 not left without their refuge, in prospect of these
 calamities. Jesus Christ, it is remarked, “en-
 “tered into holy things, that is, into holy church,
 “by holy living and holy teaching; and with his
 “blood he delivered man’s nature; as Zachariah
 “writeth in his ninth chapter, ‘Thou verily with
 “the blood of witness, or of thy testament, hast
 “led out from the pit them that were bound.’ So
 “when we were sinful, and the children of wrath,
 “God’s Son came out of heaven, and praying his
 “Father for his enemies, he died for us. Then
 “much rather shall we be saved, now we are
 “made righteous through his blood. St. Paul
 “writeth to the Romans, that Jesus should pray
 “for us, and that he went into heaven to appear
 “in the presence of God for us. The same also
 “he writeth to the Hebrews, the which presence
 “may He grant us to behold, who liveth and
 “reigneth without end! Amen.”

The opinions, and the feeling, disclosed in this
 production, though but imperfectly developed,
 are such as to prepare the reader to anticipate in
 Wycliffe, a devout opponent of the corruptions
 which it describes with so much solemnity and
 pathos. It is important to know, that even at

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The reli-
gious cha-
racter of
Wycliffe’s
mind in the
thirty-se-
cond year of
his age.

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this period of his history, the nefarious practices connected with the appointment of the clergy to the sphere of their duties, had so far shocked his piety, as to dispose him to expect a speedy and signal manifestation of the displeasure of Heaven. And if some years must pass, before we meet the reformer again, as an author, it is but just to conclude, from what is thus before us, that much of this interval was employed in efforts to check the evil of the times, and to diffuse better knowledge of the faith and obligations of the gospel. At a later period this object is well known to have engaged the whole of his energies. And already his character as an expositor of holy writ, and his views of the nature of religion, and of pastoral duty, were distinguished by many of the peculiarities which are so prominent in his later compositions. In this, the thirty-second year of his age, we perceive his mind raised so far above the ordinary level, as to unfit him for an acquiescence in many existing customs, though sanctioned by the practice of ages and nations. But laborious application, intercourse with men, the storms of human life, and sickness, and old age, all yet remained to have their influence in forming those sentiments, which were to shed their ennobling power upon his nature, before leaving a world, which he so generously struggled to improve.

CHAPTER II.

THE MENDICANTS.—IMPORTANCE OF WYCLIFFE'S CONTROVERSY WITH THEM.
 — CAUSES WHICH FAVOURED THEIR POPULARITY.—THEIR FIRST SETTLEMENT IN ENGLAND.—THEIR DISORDERLY CONDUCT EXPOSED BY ARMACHANUS — AND BY WYCLIFFE. — SUMMARY OF WYCLIFFE'S OBJECTIONS TO THEIR PRACTICES. — THE PECULIARITY, AND PROBABLE COSTS, OF HIS OPPOSITION. — HE IS ELECTED MASTER OF BALIOL, AND AFTERWARDS OF CANTERBURY HALL. — HIS DISPUTE RESPECTING THE WARDENSHIP OF THE LATTER. — HIS APPEAL TO THE PONTIFF. — HIS FIRMNESS AND INTEGRITY AT THIS CRISIS. — URBAN THE FIFTH'S DEMAND OF THE CENSUS. — DECISION OF THE ENGLISH PARLIAMENT. — WYCLIFFE IS CHALLENGED TO DEFEND IT. — HIS REPLY. — THE MENDICANT CONTROVERSY SUBMITTED TO THE PARLIAMENT. — WYCLIFFE PROBABLY KNOWN TO THE COURT AT THIS PERIOD.

WE have noticed a proclamation, issued by the king in 1348, with a view to check the exorbitant claims of the labouring classes arising out of the ravages occasioned by the late pestilence. Among other particulars, it prohibited the relief of mendicants who might be pronounced capable of servitude. But the monarch was aware, that there existed a numerous fraternity within his dominions, wholly unaffected by this prohibition, though strangers to labour, and deriving their subsistence from the bounty, and frequently from the penury, of others. The friars-mendicant were a class of men, filling a place of too much importance in the religious system of the fourteenth century, and too nearly connected in their history with the name of

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 The mendicants.

CHAP. II. our reformer, not to be frequently noticed in these pages. It was in the year 1360, that Wycliffe became distinguished at Oxford as the object of their enmity, by publishing his censures of their many errors and delinquencies.¹ To the disputes which followed, much of his subsequent decision in the work of reformation is to be attributed.

Importance of Wycliffe's controversy with them.

The controversy was one conducted against some of the most powerful minds of that generation, involving principles of the highest importance, and leading to results the most momentous in the history of religion, since the age of inspired teachers. Irritated by the reasonings of their opponent, the mendicants fled to the protection of the papacy, and before the pontifical tribunal the complaints of auxiliaries so devoted to its cause would not be preferred in vain. The favour, however, which was thence obtained, disclosed an exercise of power so palpably irreligious and unjust, as to prepare the way for an easy abandonment of various matters, deriving the whole of their support from so doubtful an authority.

Causes which favoured their popularity.

In the early ages of the church, the piety which was scandalized by the vices of many who were numbered with the professors of the gospel, may have been frequently edified by the opposite examples of monastic severity. A numerous class indeed, in every community, disgusted by the growing secularity of the clergy, and of the times, would not fail to regard the seclusion of fraternities, under the most solemn vows of separation from the world, with a peculiar veneration. But the

¹ Wood, 83, 96, 181, 150, 154, 155.

wealth which had rendered the cathedral a scene of luxury, ambition, or avarice, was soon to extend its baneful influence, and in equal measure, to the convent. The vices of the latter were less exposed to the rude notice of the people than those of the former; but in secret, the most rank productions were found to vegetate; and to impart a feeble check to the progress of corruption, was the utmost achieved by the much applauded labours of St. Benedict. In the twelfth century universities arose, but arose as establishments separated from the castle of the bishop, and from the cell of the monk; and, in no small degree, as the result of that degeneracy, which had long been observable in both. To recover the whole of that credit, which by such means had become lost to the church, was the comprehensive design of that new discipline to which the mendicant orders pledged their obedience. The wealth by which the secular clergy, and the votaries of seclusion, had become alike corrupted, was solemnly relinquished for dependance on the mere alms of the people; and with an itinerant discharge of clerical duties, they were to connect that portion of learning, which might enable them to promote the cause of the church in the national seminaries.² But the mendicants were to inherit the indiscretions of their predecessors, as well as their fame; and, after a time, were in their turn to contribute much toward the overthrow of a fabric which it had been their ambition to uphold.

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² Warton's History of English Poetry, i. sect. ix. See also, Preliminary View, c. i. sect. ii.

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Their first
settlement
in Oxford.

It was under the sanction of the founder of the Dominicans, that Gilbert de Fresney, and twelve of his brethren, appeared in England in 1221, fixing their residence in Oxford.³ The general causes, which had conferred so speedy a popularity on the new discipline upon the continent, were equally operative in this country. As preachers, these prosperous fraternities were cordially patronized by the celebrated Grossteste. The justice, however, of their particular claims, soon became doubtful; and the men who were for a while the favourites of that prelate, became the object of his bitterest censure before his decease.⁴ Their zeal, also, to proselyte the young in the universities, occasioned, at a later period, a general feeling of discontent and alarm. Paris had resounded with complaints against them, when Fitzralph, who had been called, in 1333, to the chancellorship of Oxford, and, in 1347, to the archbishopric of Armagh, appeared as a vigorous opponent of their errors and encroachments. Professing the greatest reverence for the authority of the church, and some esteem even for these new orders, he denied the virtue of their voluntary poverty; censured their inroads on the province of the more ancient clergy; and affirmed, that by their influence, the students of Oxford had been reduced, within his memory, from thirty thousand, to not more than a fifth of that number. These complaints were fearlessly preferred before the pontiff at Avignon, in

Their dis-
orderly con-
duct ex-
posed by
Armachanus.

³ Wood, Ann.

⁴ Matthew Paris. 876. Objections to Friars, c. lxxvi.

the year 1357. But the death of the archbishop, three years later, left his proposed reformation unaccomplished. The failure of his efforts, and his decease, were viewed by his opponents as the triumph of their cause. It was not perceived, that the year of his removal would be that in which Wycliffe should commence his more memorable attack on the same order of abuses.

The "Conclusions" published at the papal court by Fitzralph were familiar to Wycliffe, and have descended to us.⁵ And it may be regretted, that we have no composition by our reformer, on the same subject, which will admit of being attributed to so early a period as the year 1360. But nearly the whole of his writings are more or less connected with the points of this controversy; and comparing them with each other, and with the conclusions of Armachanus, the sameness of the reasoning and illustration employed, affords abundant reason to conclude, that the discussions of the year 1360, comprehended nearly the whole of those "Objections," the republication of which, was among the reformer's latest efforts. With respect to these "new orders," but one opinion can be found in Wycliffe's compositions. If God had indeed conferred them on the church, it was his firm conviction that it had been done as a chastisement, in the same manner as a king had been given to Israel. But a sanction was supposed to

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And by
Wycliffe.

⁵ MS. De Blasphemia, Bibl. Bodl. Archi. 83. See the story of Armachanus, and of the disputes between the

mendicants and the students of Paris, Fox, i. 732—742.

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— by the poverty of Christ, and of his apostles; and this circumstance had imperceptibly induced a habit of appeal to the sacred scriptures, as to a decisive authority. The volume of inspired truth was thus brought from its obscurity, and was vested, though for mistaken purposes, with something of the homage due to it, as the guide of religious opinion. Such as were displeased by the obtrusive services of the friars, were thus naturally directed to the records of the gospel, that the justice of these novel pretensions might be thence ascertained or confuted; and the arguments opposed with most success to the peculiarities of these innovators, were derived from the source to which they had themselves been the first to appeal. It is scarcely to be questioned, that to these facts we are considerably indebted for Wycliffe's early attachment to the doctrine, which affirms the sufficiency of the scriptures with regard to all the purposes of faith and duty—a doctrine, in which the right of private judgment was obviously implied. And it will hereafter appear, that no modern theologian has been more aware of the importance of these maxims than Wycliffe, or more successful in defending them. It is probable, indeed, that he was very far from anticipating the last result of his inquiries, when he first became known as the opponent of the new orders; but we have sufficient evidence to justify the conclusion, that even then, these momentous sentiments had become in a hopeful degree familiar to his mind.

The failure of Fitzralph, in his more limited project of reform, had left no room to hope for improvement, as emanating from the papacy; and probably suggested to his successor in the contest, the necessity of a more complete exposure of ecclesiastical corruption, and of a more vigorous appeal to the common sense of every class among the people.

Among the few of Wycliffe's writings which have been printed, is the work intitled, "Objections to Friars."⁶ This treatise is divided into fifty chapters, and presents a summary of the reasonings usually urged by the opponents of the mendicants. Many of the complaints made, and of the arguments adduced, in this production, are such as might perhaps have been frequently heard, in the fourteenth century, from the lips of the secular clergy, and even from the monks. To the advocates of reform, the whole were soon familiar, and, published without either weariness or fear, became greatly subservient to their cause. As transmitted by the pen of Wycliffe, these objections accuse the mendicants of opposing the progress of the gospel. It appears, that they were accustomed to praise a contemplative, as

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Summary of
his "Objec-
tions" to
their prac-
tices.

⁶ This treatise, together with that addressed by the reformer to the parliament of Richard the second, was printed by Dr. James from manuscripts, "the one in Bennet college, the other remaining in the publike librarie at Oxford," in 1608. A reference in the former document (chap. xxiv.) to the existing war in Flanders, as a war of much cost to the country, and as

only designed "to make Christ's vicar "the most wealthy in the world," fixes the date of this manuscript to the year 1382, only two years before Wycliffe's death. It was at this period, that Urban the sixth gave his sanction to the warlike bishop of Norwich, to wield the carnal weapons of an English army against the adherents of his rival, Clement the seventh.

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preferable to an active life ; that they were men of defective morals in the discharge of their functions as confessors ;⁷ that the vow of their fraternity was strictly unalterable ; that persons detected, while not of their order, in “travelling to sow God’s “word among the people,” were often persecuted by them, imprisoned, and sentenced to perish at the stake ; and that they were wont to teach, that without a licence from the secular authorities, no man should be suffered to preach the gospel to the people ; and this, “though the preacher possess “never so much knowledge of God’s law, and “power, and will, to work after that knowledge ; “and the sovereign be never so depraved of life, “ignorant of God’s law, and a foe to the souls of “christian men.” These are among the facts adduced to substantiate the charge that the mendicants were hostile to the progress of a scriptural religion. These offenders, are farther said to enter the fold of the church unlawfully, and to invade the known rights of the more ancient clergy ; and their endless exactions are censured, as alike cruel and unjust, since their tendency had been to deprive the really necessitous of certain aids which were originally designed for them, and which they would otherwise continue to receive. Their wiles, employed to induce young children to

⁷ Chap. xiv. xix. xxiii. xxvi. xxvii. xxxi. This sin was charged on them by Grossteste, and they had not improved since.—Paris 876. And the statement of Fitzralph is as follows.—“I have in my diocese of Armagh, about two thousand persons, who stand condemned by the censures of the church denounced every year

against murderers, thieves, and such like malefactors, of all which number scarcely fourteen have applied to me or to my clergy for absolution. Yet they all receive the sacraments as others do, because they are absolved, or pretend to be absolved, by friars.”—Fox, ubi supra.

assume their "rotten habit;" their shameless corruption of the rules established by their respective founders; and their uniting, as a consequence, more than the splendours of secular lordship,⁸ with the gravest professions of the most absolute poverty, are among the points adverted to, as proofs of consummate hypocrisy. Against their practice as beggars, several of the most appropriate scriptures are cited, and the names of St. Clement, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Benedict, St. Bernard, and even that of St. Francis, are adduced as authorities. While directly accused of contempt for the civil power; of encouraging simony, with a view to share in its spoil; and of preferring the dispensations of the pope, to the known commands of the Redeemer; it is more than insinuated, that by their influence the secrets of the state frequently became known to its enemies, and the wealth of the kingdom passed into the hands of foreigners, to strengthen the sinews of their war against us. If the charge of blasphemy be also preferred, it is not without some degree of justice. The power attributed to the pontiff, in the act of pardon, by these dispensers of his spiritual

⁸ A little more than half century had intervened, since the Franciscans attempted to bribe the pontiff, offering his holiness no less a sum than forty thousand ducats in gold to sanction the violation of their rule with respect to property. The pontiff is said to have sent for the money from the banker to whom it had been intrusted, and seizing it as the fruit of transgression, respectfully informed the astonished appli-

cants that the rule of St. Francis was not to be infringed.—Westminster, 1299. It is said that the present general of that order has not a less income than twenty thousand a year. If this be true, it is obvious that to save the clergy from the snares of wealth, something more is necessary than the prohibition of estates, or of fixed revenues.

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bounty, was such, as in truth pertains to the Deity alone; and by vesting the rule of their order, with an authority which they had not learned to attach to that of the Saviour, it is certain that they reflected on the Author of the gospel, as inferior to their patrons "in wit, in " might, or in charity."

Peculiarities and probable costs of his opposition.

Such is the substance of Wycliffe's treatise against the begging friars.⁹ Their errors, and their vices, had never been so generally, or so forcibly assailed. That which distinguished the efforts of our reformer, from those of Armachanus, and others, was his exposure of these evils as the necessary consequence of the mendicant discipline. While other disputants sought to reform particulars, Wycliffe saw the institute itself as uncommanded, and of evil tendency; and instead of supposing, as some good men had done, that

⁹ The document published by Mr. Lewis, c. ii. though frequently referred to as that composed by Wycliffe, is scarcely a statement of its contents; it cannot be called an abridgment.

Mr. Lewis has also given some passages on this subject (pp. 7, 8.) from the Reformer's work, entitled, "Of Clerks, Possessioniers," and from his tract, containing his dispute with a mendicant, in the presence of the duke of Gloucester; and this is done in a manner which suggests that these pieces are to be considered as not remotely connected with the year 1360. But the reader should be apprized, that the first of these productions was not published until somewhat more than twenty years after that period. The reformer's itinerant priests, were a class of men who did not exist until toward the close of his life. These

men, however, are repeatedly adverted to in this treatise, and as suffering much persecution, from their resolve to copy the example of the first Christian teachers, "in living poorly and justly, and going about, teaching freely God's law."—MS. C. C. C. Cambridge, chap. xvi. The second MS. consists of fourteen pages only, the former half relating to some theological opinions involved in the discussion: the latter, including some of the most plausible things to be said in favour of the begging principle, and the reformer's usual reasonings opposed to them. This piece contains nothing to render its date certain; but, my impression is, that it belongs to a period considerably subsequent to 1360.—MS. Trin. Coll. Dub. Note to the second edition.

the introduction of such agents formed the most efficient means by which to elevate the character of the more authorized priesthood, he inculcated strongly, that nothing short of a removal of the intruders could restore the church to its long lost order and prosperity. At the same time, he remarks, and with a discernment and generosity hardly belonging to the age, that though men should "destroy their errors," they should "save their persons," the bringing of them "to that living, which Christ ordained for priests" being the extent of his demands. Of the penalties incurred by the author of such reproofs, we may judge, from the spirit and power of the parties accused, and from the little delicacy felt in the middle ages, as to the means which might be honourably employed to crush an adversary. The force of the malevolence actually excited, may be inferred from the statement, that "a lord would more patiently bear a severe censuring of his least offence, than mendicants the soft and mild reproving of their greatest sins." Through nearly two centuries, the Inquisition had been performing its work of torture and destruction on the continent. During that period, its odious business had devolved chiefly on the order of St. Dominic or of St. Francis; and these, while appealing to the rack and the stake, as their ultimate weapons of debate, are described as "the confessors, the preachers, and the rulers commonly of all men." It will avail nothing to insinuate, that the "Objections" thus preferred by Wycliffe, have received an undue colouring from the

CHAP. II. warmth of his passions. Disputants, too frequently, manifest a greater solicitude to cover an antagonist with odium, than to guide an inquirer to truth. It is lamentable that such a vice should ever be found connected with religious controversy. But it is important to observe, that the charges urged by Wycliffe in this instance, refer principally to facts, and the praise of discernment so generally conceded to him, obliges us to suppose that their truth was notorious.

Wycliffe
elected mas-
ter of Baliol.

The year 1360 has been mentioned, as that in which our reformer became distinguished by his zeal in this contest. In the year following, the society of Baliol college discovered their favourable judgment of his character, and of his services in the cause of the university, by presenting him to the living of Fillingham¹⁰—a benefice of considerable value, and situate in the diocese of Lincoln. By the same community, and within the same period, John de Wycliffe was called to the dignity of warden.¹¹ Four years later, how-

¹⁰ Magister Joh. Wycliffe presbyter presenta. per Magist. et Scholares Aule de Baliol Oxon. ad Eccle. de Fylingham, vac. per mort. Joh. Reyner, 11, Id. May, 1361. in Archi. Stow.—It is thus, also, that the name of Wycliffe occurs in a notice found in the diocesan register, where it refers to the uniting of the church of Abbodesle to Baliol hall:—“*Memorand.* Quod nuper defuncto—rectore ecclesie parochialis de Abbodesle, Linco. dioc. in Archidiacon. Hunt. venit magister Job. de Wyclif tunc custos seu magister Aule de Balliol, Oxon. et exhibuit Venera. Patri Domino Johanni Lincol. Episcopo literas Apostolicas,” &c.—Reg. Gynwell MS. fol. 367, 368. In 1368,

Wycliffe relinquished the living of Fillingham for that of Lutgersal, as appears from the following note:—“*Johannes de Wyclif, presbiter, presentatus per fratrem Johannem de Pavely priorem Hospitalis Johannis Jerusalem in Anglia ad ecclesiam de Lotegareshall Linc. dioc. Archidiacon. Bucks. per resignat. domini Johannis Wythornewyk, ex causa permutationis de ipsa cum ecclesia parochiali de Fylingham, dicte dioc. admissus Nov. 12, 1368. Reg. Bokingham.*”—Lewis. iv. 5. 17.

¹¹ That Wycliffe was warden of Baliol college in 1361, is the general statement of his biographers. But there is one circumstance which has

ever, we find him accepting the same office, in connexion with Canterbury hall; and for this honour he was indebted to the enlightened friendship of Simon de Islep, then archbishop of Canterbury. This primate had filled some of the most important offices in the church and the government, and with his attachment to learning, united a contempt of luxury, and an abhorrence of clerical delin-

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II.

And warden
of Canter-
bury hall.

appeared to throw a shade of uncertainty over this conclusion. The reader must be apprised, that a few years later, Wycliffe appealed to the pontiff for restoration to his wardenship of Canterbury hall. And the circumstance referred to is, that Langham, then archbishop of Canterbury, in attempting to justify his conduct toward the appellant, has employed language, which implies that Wycliffe had been recently numbered with the secular scholars of the said foundation. It is true, individuals and societies were subject to more sudden and violent changes in those ages than at present, and that Wycliffe should relinquish the wardenship at Baliol, to assume the same office in an infant institution, may be accounted for on the ground that the younger seminary was rising beneath the patronage of a living metropolitan. But that the master of an older institution should descend to the rank of scholar in the younger, is by no means probable. Accordingly, if what is implied in the language of the archbishop be correct, it is difficult to suppose that Wycliffe was ever master of Baliol. Opposed however to the negative conclusion are the following decisive facts. 1st. It is not to be questioned, that the office of warden in Baliol college was sustained in the year 1361, by a John de Wycliffe. 2d. The John de Wycliffe, of Baliol, was in the same year presented to the living of Fillingham; and, lastly, in

1368, the living of Fillingham was assuredly occupied by our reformer, being relinquished by him in the November of that year, in favour of Lutgersal.

In addition to which, Langham retained his archiepiscopal dignity but two years; removing to Avignon, the residence of the pope, in 1368. His knowledge of Wycliffe's case appears to have been at best imperfect; his information would not be increased by his removal to Avignon, and it is from the papal court that he makes the statement adverted to. The inference therefore is, that Wycliffe was never reckoned with the scholars at Canterbury hall, but that the archbishop, from some unknown cause, had presumed him to have been of their number. The trivial mistake may be easily supposed, and then the direct evidence of Wycliffe's being master of Baliol, in 1361, remains wholly undisturbed. If the John Wycliffe, master of Baliol, be viewed as another person of that name, we must, from various facts, suppose him to have been a member of the family with which we have judged the reformer himself to have been connected. But that the family adverted to, should have included two persons so named, and that no notice of either should occur in its records, while others of so much less note are inserted, is to the last degree improbable.

CHAP. quencies, which rendered him, to the incompetent
 II. and the vicious, an object of terror.¹² Wycliffe
 may have felt himself flattered by an appointment,
 which not only originated with the first eccle-
 siastic of the realm, but with one so much dis-
 posed to investigate pretensions to learning and
 piety. He saw not the difficulty, however, to
 which this promotion would soon expose him, or
 the proffered distinction would, perhaps, have been
 declined. By such a step he would have saved
 himself from some inconvenience and vexation,
 but there were some lessons respecting the
 policy of Rome, which, in that case, he would
 have failed to learn, and which were not more
 painful to him, than important to the due pro-
 secution of the object for which he was to live.

His dispute
 respecting
 his warden-
 ship.

Canterbury hall had been founded by the pre-
 sent archbishop, and was designed for the benefit
 of eleven scholars, eight of whom were to be
 clerks, or secular clergymen; the remaining three,
 and the warden, were to be chosen from the
 monks of Christchurch, Canterbury. The office
 of warden was first conferred on Woodhall, a
 monk, and a doctor in divinity, but a man whose
 restless spirit had proved the ceaseless occasion
 of disorder, and who threw the whole violence of
 his temper into the disputes which had long di-
 vided the religious ecclesiastics from the secular.
 It was with deep regret that Islep saw the com-
 munity, on which he had lavished his patronage

¹² The effects of his discipline were
 such, that Symwell, bishop of Lincoln,
 gave the pope a sum of money to be
 freed from the jurisdiction of his metro-

politan, and to be placed under that of
 his holiness. But the primate speedily
 demolished this disorderly barrier.—
 Collier i. 553.

and his substance, conspicuous rather for dissension than improvement; and availing himself of a provision in the founding of the institution, he removed the present warden, and the three monks his adherents; and supplying the place of the latter with the same number of secular scholars, he invited John de Wycliffe to the vacant office of master. These arrangements were but recently completed, when the decease of the archbishop, was followed by the appointment of Peter Langham as his successor in office. This prelate, translated from the see of Ely, had been previously abbot of Westminster, and a private monk.¹³ His known attachment to the religious orders, and his present elevation, by an act of papal provision, disclosed to Woodhall, and his expelled associates, a prospect of reinstatement too inviting to be lost. Their appeal was respectfully heard, and under a pretence that the late changes in Canterbury hall had, by some mysterious means, been forced upon its founder, or at least had received his approbation at a time when hardly competent to a rational decision, the monks were restored, and Woodhall, after the interval of a few weeks, resumed the

¹³ In ecclesiastical history, the most luxurious and ambitious churchmen, have frequently proved the most zealous patrons of monks. They appear as if concerned to atone for their own idolatry of the world, by encouraging others in their apparent contempt of it. From the following lines, written on the occasion of Langham's removal from Ely, it appears that the day of his departure was no day of mourning.

Exultant coeli, quia Simon, transit ab
Ely
Ad ejus adventum, flet in Kent millia
centum.

He had united the chancellorship of England with the rank of prelate; but covertly grasping at the princely dignity of a cardinal, he fell under the royal displeasure, and relinquishing his primacy, retired to Avignon.—*Anglia Sacra*. i. 47, 48, 120.

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office of warden. The weakness, and the dishonesty, of the plea advanced in favour of this counterchange, are manifest, and must have been so to its authors. Islep, when vesting Wycliffe with the authority of master, describes him as a man in whose fidelity, circumspection, and industry, he much confided; and as one whom he now called to this office, on account of the honesty of his life, his laudable conversation, and his knowledge of letters. But it had soon become evident, that to anticipate harmony from that mixture of the religious and the secular, which the candour of Islep had contemplated, was to expect a power of cohesion between the iron and the clay; and the point to be determined, in consequence, was, to which of these classes the benefits of the establishment should be exclusively applied? This question had, indeed, been decided, most explicitly, by the acts of the founder; but opposed to his known pleasure was that of certain intriguing monks. The fact also, that the secular scholars provided for by the first arrangements of the institution, were twice the number of the religious, was itself sufficient to demonstrate, that, from the beginning, the advantages of the seminary were designed *chiefly* for that class of persons.¹⁴

His appeal
to the Pope.

It will be conceded, that the surrender of an important cause to the judgment of an arbitrator known to be unfriendly, is no mean proof of conscientious integrity. Wycliffe was aware of the

¹⁴ The whole of the papers relating to this dispute may be seen in the Appendix, No. II.—IX.

encouragement which the religious orders had derived from the papal court, in conducting their insidious attacks on the rights of the clergy, and on the immunities claimed by the universities. But he was also aware of being supported in his present suit by the will of the dead, and by a degree of obvious justice, which it might be deemed impolitic to evade. He therefore joined his expelled associates, in an appeal from the judgment of the metropolitan to that of the pope. The pontiff could not be insensible to the difficulties of the question, and prudently transferred the investigation of its details to the diligence of a cardinal. The same policy suggested the delay of a definite sentence, and nearly four years passed before it could be obtained. But the fact that Wycliffe should have appealed to Rome, even under these circumstances, may be regarded as evidence, that he had not yet learned to question either the claims, or the integrity, of the pontiffs, as in later years. The circumstance is, at the same time, compatible with far more modified views of papal pretensions than were generally adopted.

But if this appeal from the judgment of his metropolitan, to that of the pope, may be viewed as the proof of confidence in the justice of his cause,—his subsequent conduct must be allowed to bespeak the same conviction still more plainly. He could not be ignorant that the slightest indication of feeling, hostile to the claims of the Roman prelates, would be marked by his opponents, and reported to the papal

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His firmness
and inte-
grity at this
crisis.

CHAP. court, with suitable comments, and the darkest
 II. colouring. From December, 1365, to March, 1367, he had possessed his wardenship; and from his part in the appeal to the pontiff, he must be supposed to have felt somewhat solicitous to preserve it. Had his spirit been capable of subjection to a little calculating policy, he would doubtless have abstained, at least for a while, from his attacks on a class of men known as the most effective agents of the papal power. It is, however, while this cause is pending, that the zeal of Wycliffe, as the enemy of corruption, whether in the head or the members of the hierarchy, became so far conspicuous as to attract attention from the highest authorities in the realm. His pen was still employed, and his voice was still heard, in defence of the university, opposing that independence of its laws which the popes had attempted in favour of the mendicants; nor was he less active in the cause of the parochial clergy, whose flocks were frequently estranged from them by the influence of those more devoted ministers of the superstitions, and of the despotic authority of Rome.¹⁵

Urban's demand of the census.

It is at this crisis, also, that we find his name fearlessly associated with a controversy which had arisen between Edward the third, and the pontiff, Urban the fifth. It was in 1365, that the letters of Urban demanded of the English monarch, the annual payment of a thousand marks,

¹⁵ Anthony Wood waxes quite va-
 liant in asserting, that the zeal for
 innovation which Wycliffe had previ-
 ously discovered, and "nothing else,"

occasioned the loss of his wardenship.
 Hist. ubi supra. Fox makes the same
 statement, Acts i. 557; as does Mo-
 sheim, iii. 332, and others.

to be transferred to the papal treasury, as a feudal acknowledgment for the sovereignty of England and Ireland, those kingdoms being, it was said, held in fee of the successors of St. Peter. The reader will be aware, that this offensive claim was founded on the alleged surrender of the English crown, by king John, to Innocent the third. That monarch survived this odious stipulation but two years, and by his son the oath of fealty was repeated. By succeeding princes that formality was prudently evaded, and the claim of the tribute was either neglected or honoured, as the favour of the pontiff was felt to be important or otherwise. Thirty-three years had passed since the last annual tribute had been paid, when the arrears for that interval, and the feudal subjection which the sum was intended to express, were demanded by Urban. In default of such payment, the king was farther admonished, that he would be cited duly to appear, and to answer for such neglect, in the court of the sovereign pontiff, who had become his civil, no less than his religious superior.¹⁶

In the following year, Edward submitted this question to his parliament. From the decease of John, the influence of that assembly had been rapidly increasing, and the commons had become an essential, and often an efficient, portion of the legislature. At this period, indeed, it was both

Spirited decision of the English parliament.

¹⁶ Cotton's Abridgment, 102. Barnes has questioned whether this tribute was paid by any sovereign after John.—Book iii. c. 12. It appears, however, from certain notices in Rymer, that it was paid, though not without consider-

able intermissions, to the close of Edward's minority.—Tom. ii. 5 Edw. I. Dec. 18; 6 Edw. I. Feb. 23; 16 Edw. I. April 28; 29 Edw. I. March 18; Tom. iv. 1 Edw. III. April 28.

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the law and the practice of the realm, that every statute affecting the general interest, should depend for its validity on the sanction of the three estates; and that the property of the subject should not be taxed without his consent. The reign of Edward extended to fifty years, during which period, more than seventy parliaments, possessing this high authority, were convened; and more than once it was solemnly enacted, that one such assembly, at least, should be annually summoned.¹⁷ The claim now advanced was one in which the honour of the nation was involved. The king, therefore, in the person of his chancellor, requested the advice of parliament, as to the answer which should be returned to the pope. The prelates solicited a day for private deliberation; but assembling on the morrow, the lords spiritual and temporal, and the members of the commons, were unanimous in stating, that neither king John, nor any other sovereign, had power thus to subject the realm of England, without consent of parliament; that this consent was not obtained; and that, passing over other difficulties, the whole transaction, on the part of the king, was in violation of the oath which he had taken on receiving his crown. By the temporal nobility, and the popular representatives, it was farther determined, that should the pontiff commence his threatened process against the monarch of England, as his vassal, the strength of the nation should be instantly called to the king's aid.

This phalanx of opposition could not have been

¹⁷ Lingard, iv. 160.

anticipated by Urban, though, assuredly, the demand ought to have appeared to him as most unseasonable. The victories of Cressy and Poitiers had recently diffused the military fame of England, and the peace of Bretigni had secured to Edward every thing which could have been rationally expected as the fruit of his incursions upon France. But Urban felt not the weight of these circumstances, until it was too late to profit by them. His successors in office became wiser at his cost. From this period, they appear to have relinquished all hope of any direct secular supremacy in England. The flattering elevation was doubtless abandoned with regret, and sycophants would certainly arise, to plead even for this arrogant pretension as sacred, though denounced by the legislature of their country, as a usurpation too gross to be endured.

It will be borne in mind by the reader, that a subjection of the civil power, in all its departments, to the presiding authority of the hierarchy, was viewed by many, in the ages now adverted to, as the only arrangement consistent with the relation of the parties, the latter being considered as the parent of the former. To this theory, which made the church the mother of the state, and which, as a consequence, rendered bishops the fathers of princes, every patriot feeling was often surrendered, and surrendered as the most unquestionable evidence of exalted piety. To minds of such a character, the decision of the English parliament respecting the tribute claimed by the pontiff, must have

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Wycliffe is
challenged
to defend it.

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 been seriously unwelcome ; and connected with various recent movements, tending to abridge the general influence of the clergy, it must have awakened the strongest displeasure in many quarters. This effect we see strikingly exemplified in the conduct of an anonymous monk, who soon after the judgment of the parliament became known, published a defence of the pontifical claim, entering warmly into the discussion of the questions so long at issue between the secular and the spiritual powers. At this period, Wycliffe's celebrity had arisen, chiefly, from his dispute with the mendicants ; and if their vices were merely those of a particular class of offenders, we have seen that the reproof of these created a spirit of inquiry, extending itself, imperceptibly, and almost necessarily, to many of the corruptions by which other features of the general system were equally disfigured.

A summary of the tract, published by the monastic controversialist alluded to, has been transmitted to us by the pen of Wycliffe. From this it appears, that the writer viewed the sovereignty of England as legally forfeited to the pope, by the failure of the annual tribute ; and that in his creed, the clergy, whether considered as individuals or communities, were fairly exempt, both in person and property, from all subjection to the magistrate.¹⁸ Our reformer is called upon by name to prove the fallacy of these opinions. Nor

¹⁸ This tract is preserved among the Selden manuscripts, and was printed by Mr. Lewis. Its insertion in the

Appendix to this volume is thought to be unnecessary, as every thing material in it appears in the text.

was he in ignorance, concerning the motives of his anonymous antagonist, in assailing him with this challenge. The questions to be discussed, were such as could not be approached without hazard; and it is stated by Wycliffe, as information which he had received, that the hope of his opponent was, in the first place, to defame his person before the pontiff, that laden with ecclesiastical censures, he might be deprived of his preferments; secondly, to purchase the favour of the Roman court to himself, and his order; and, lastly, that the pope ruling this kingdom with less control, secular possessions might be more largely accumulated by the religious. To counteract, in some measure, this tendency to slander, Wycliffe describes himself as a humble and obedient son of the church, proposing to affirm nothing that may be reported to her injury, or reasonably offend the ears of devout men.

The reformer had recently numbered the fortieth year of his age; and the fact of his being challenged to refute the positions assumed, plainly suggests, that previous to this period, the leading features of his character, as it has descended to us, were not only formed, but generally known. There could be no meaning in such an appeal, except to a man who had become conspicuous as the opponent of undue pretension, not only as proceeding from the mendicants, but from any portion of the clergy, even from the pontiff himself. Had this attack been made by a disciple of St. Dominic, or of St. Francis, Wycliffe's dispute with

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the communities boasting of such names, would have been sufficient to explain its origin. It comes, however, from the monastery, where the mendicant orders had ever been regarded in the light of rival candidates for popular applause, and where any exposure of their errors was in general rather grateful than obnoxious. The opinions also which the antagonist of the friars was thus summoned to confute, involved the whole question of the pope's temporal power; and the entire ground of those dissensions, which had been perpetuated between the priest and the magistrate, from the conversion of the western nations.

Substance
of his reply.

In his reply, he describes himself as the king's peculiar clerk, from which it appears that he had received the honorary distinction of royal chaplain. The right of the king, in connexion with the parliament, not only to deny the tribute claimed by the pope, but to subject all clergymen to the bar of the magistrate in all civil cases, and even to alienate the goods of the church, is affirmed to be a doctrine established by the law, and also by the ancient practice of the realm. He tacitly admits that such measures may be at variance with certain ecclesiastical canons, but he contends for their strict accordance with the claims of natural right, and with the maxims of the civil law, and those of the sacred scriptures. Appealing to these sources of authority, in support of his statements, he abstains from the employment of the arguments which he was well qualified to adduce in defence of them—deeming it a more efficient method of procedure, to present his readers

with the substance of several speeches, delivered by certain secular lords, in reference to the claim lately urged on the English monarch by the pontiff. This mode of reply, while it furnished the best reproof of the personalities in which his anonymous adversary had indulged, would perhaps be farther approved, as placing the shield of authority between the humble reformer and the power of his enemies. The speeches which have been thus preserved may interest the curious reader, as exhibiting a specimen of the manner in which our senators of the fourteenth century could treat questions demanding a good degree of information and discernment. What is reported from them in this document, is not, indeed, a complete outline of the debate adverted to, but rather extracts from that memorable discussion; and the selection made, is evidently intended to place the series of difficulties in which the papal claim was involved within the smallest compass, and in their most consecutive form. To us, the paper is chiefly valuable, as containing arguments, which, by adoption, are those of Wycliffe himself; and such as appear to have derived some important peculiarities from the vigour and intrepidity of his own genius.

The first lord declares, all feudal subjection to be founded in the necessary subordinations of political power. This subordination, he contends, could not have been the origin of England's subjection to the papacy; and hence it is inferred, that on the principles of feudal justice, the dependence introduced should not be regarded as

CHAP. a thing at all fit to be continued. Should the
II. ——— pontiff attempt to supply this deficiency in the foundation of his present claim, by resorting to force, the speaker avows his readiness to appeal to the same weapons. The next speaker extends this line of argument. Feudal tribute, he observes, can be justly due only where feudal protection might be rendered. This protection the pope cannot afford to those whom he now claims as his vassals, nor ought he to meddle with such modes of protection, though they were really at his command, since the character distinguishing his holiness, should be that of “chief in the following of Christ;” and the Saviour having no where to lay his head, has taught his ministers, by example, the contempt with which they should regard all earthly power and possessions. The duty of the moment is, therefore, declared to be, to resist this demand of civil homage, and carefully to limit the influence of the pope to the spiritualities of his office. While it was thus shown, that this feudal tribute could not be exacted on the ground of feudal benefits; the third speaker declares, and with equal plainness, that it could as little be founded on any religious advantages, supposed to result to the nation from this vassalage to the papal court—inasmuch as the influence of the pontiff, and of his cardinals, was employed in little else than to deprive the land of its treasure, and to aid the cause of its enemies. This nobleman was succeeded by a fourth, who states, that one-third of the property of the kingdom had become that of the church;

that over this property the pope had long claimed the authority of lordship, and, in consequence, exacted his first-fruits from every vacant benefice. This interference in temporal things, it is observed, must be either as vassal to the king, or as his superior. If the former doctrine would be rejected by the pontiff, the latter should be equally spurned by the nation; and it is, therefore, recommended to present some forcible check to the progress of claims, which, in some interval of political weakness, may extend the despotism already imposed on the church, in an equal measure to the state. The remarks of the next speaker are no less pertinent. He expresses himself curious to know the expressed condition on which the disputed tribute was first granted. If it were rendered for the benefit of absolution as conferred upon the king, or for the removal of the interdict which had passed upon the kingdom, the whole transaction is declared to be “simonean dishonesty,” demanding reprobation alike from lords and churchmen. The gifts of the priesthood, it is pleaded, have been freely bestowed, that they might be as freely administered; but the pope, under this view of his conduct, is heard to say, “I will absolve thee, only upon condition that I receive so much money annually, and for ever.” If, indeed, the pontifical claim were made, not on the ground of any spiritual benefit conferred, but on the principle of a strict feudal subjection—it is then argued, that a claim to dispose of the crown itself, might be urged at some future period, with as

CHAP. much appearance of justice as the present de-
II. mand of a census. By another lord it was observed, that if the land were ever the fair possession of the pontiff, his right to barter the goods of the church, so as to exchange an opulent kingdom for the trivial annuity of seven hundred marks, might be justly questioned. Certainly he, who could thus far alienate ecclesiastical property, might dispose of it entirely, and is not accordingly to be much coveted in the character of a feudal superior. The same speaker proceeds to state, that "Christ is the "supreme Lord, while the pope is a man, and "liable to sin, and who, while in mortal sin, "according to divines, is unfitted for dominion;" and he concludes by observing, "it is, therefore, "plainly enough for us to keep ourselves from "mortal sin, to the service of one Lord of the "kingdom; to communicate of our goods virtuously to the poor; and, as in former time, to "hold our kingdom immediately of Christ, who, "as chief Lord, teaches whatever is most lawful "and perfect, with respect to man's authority." The last speaker exposed, still more forcibly, the injustice of the papal demand, as visiting the sins of the monarch on the freedom and property of the subject, and that to remote generations. To this arrangement, in which all are certainly interested, it is argued, that according to the custom of the realm, the assent of all should have been obtained; in the place of which the seal of the king, and of a few apostate lords, has been made to suffice. The grant, therefore, as never

made by the kingdom, is contemned as one which the kingdom never should descend to recognize.¹⁹ CHAP.
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Such were the sentiments, and the reasoning, which led to that decision of the English parliament, by which the demand of the census was for ever silenced as a national question. The claim had been stated by Wycliffe's opponent, in a form of logic, from which the escape of an adversary was conceived to be impossible. Having delivered it as an axiom, that every dominion granted on condition, is dissolved on the failure of that condition, he proceeds with all gravity to remark, that the pope, as supreme lord, presented our king with the kingdom of England, on the condition that England should pay, annually, seven hundred marks to the Roman court. This condition, he observes, has been repeatedly overlooked, and the result is viewed accordingly as inevitable, viz. that the king has fallen from the true dominion of England. Wycliffe descended to reply, that this process of reasoning, which had so pleased his adversary, must be defective somewhere, since its consequence was certainly fallacious; and this defect he states as consisting in the dishonesty of the condition assumed. The supposed transfer of the land and its people, from the king to the pope, is treated as the dream of a fraudulent ambition, and presumed to be so

¹⁹ A temper much resembling this of the English commons and nobility, is observable in many belonging to the same class of persons more than a

century earlier.—Westminster, Ann. 1241. Walsingham, Hypodrigma Neustr. Ann. 1245.

CHAP. exhibited in the arguments adduced from the lips
 II. of the English senate. To these the querulous
 recluse is advised to prepare an answer; and
 Wycliffe concludes by observing, "if I mistake
 " not, the day will come in which all exactions
 " shall cease, before he will prove such a con-
 " dition to be reasonable and honest."

The mendi-
 cant contro-
 versy sub-
 mitted to
 the parlia-
 ment.

The parliament, to which the honour of anni-
 hilating this odious servitude pertains, was also
 required to interpose its authority with respect to
 the struggle still continued between the mendi-
 cants and the universities. The complaints pre-
 ferred by each party were patiently heard; and,
 from the decision of their present judges, it ap-
 pears, that the friars continued to be chargeable
 with efforts to seduce the young, and with ma-
 nifesting an adherence to the claims of the papacy,
 inconsistent with the claims of patriotism. Such,
 however, had been the mutual excitement, that
 it was deemed important to urge upon the liti-
 gants a respectful deportment in their accus-
 tomed intercourse; and in harmony with the
 previous decision respecting the tribute, it was
 resolved, that no scholar under the age of eigh-
 teen, should be received into any mendicant
 order; that no document tending in any manner
 to the injury of the national seminaries, should
 be hereafter received from the pope; and that
 every future difference between the parties at
 issue, should be decided in the court of the king,
 and without farther appeal.²⁰

²⁰ Cotton's Abridgment, 102, 103. Collier, i. 560.

We have no direct information as to the persons on whom it devolved to advocate the cause of the universities on this occasion. There are facts, however, which afford the strongest presumption, that the defence of Oxford was not conducted without the assistance of Wycliffe. His name had become connected with the present controversy far beyond that of any living man; and the legal provisions now made, went to the removal of evils against which his loudest complaints had been directed. It is farther evident, that this application to the high court of parliament was preferred with cautious solicitude by both parties; and it is important to remark, that of the debate immediately preceding the discussion of this question in the senate, Wycliffe was himself an auditor.²¹ Such, too, was the resentment of Edward at this crisis, that he not only refused the badge of feudal homage demanded by the pope, but also, the ancient and more harmless tribute of Peter's-pence; and under this feeling he appears to have conferred on our reformer the title of royal chaplain,—a distinction of which we find him possessed immediately afterwards, and one, the obtaining of which, it would be otherwise difficult to explain.

From all these circumstances we may safely conclude, that the person of Wycliffe, then the warden of Canterbury hall, was not unknown to the members of the parliament convened in 1366. It is evident that the doctrines of which he after-

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Wycliffe probably known to the court from this period.

²¹ The speeches introduced (he observes) are those "quam audivi in

"quodam Concilio a Dominis secularibus."

CHAP. wards became so prominent an advocate, exerted
II. a powerful influence over that assembly. The
interference of the papal court in temporal matters was there censured with a peculiar freedom; while the boldest comparisons were sometimes ventured between the primitive and the present pastors of the church. The conclusions which followed the discussions referring to the census, and to the mendicants, were precisely those which were subsequently censured as emanating from the mind of our reformer, or as having found in him their most distinguished advocate. The entire subjection of the property of the realm, and of all its persons, in their civil capacity, to the authority of the magistrate, are the tenets avowed in the senate; and they are published by Wycliffe, as tenets which he is prepared to defend. But it is of most importance to observe, that in the assembly where these questions were so ably investigated, it was also affirmed, and apparently without contradiction, that the canon law, on which so much pretension had been founded, was in itself of humble authority, being rendered superfluous by the christian scriptures, which, considered alone, are described as sufficient to determine every point of moral or religious obligation. The pontiff also, contrasted with the invisible head of the church, is not only described as a mere man, and as peccable, but as liable to the guilt of mortal transgression; and, considered in the latter state, is declared to have forfeited every right to ecclesiastical dominion. The reader will not need to be informed, that

such opinions would give offence to many, and that by more they would be questioned as new and dangerous. It is certain, that in England, the doctrine thus affirmed respecting the sufficiency of the scriptures, and respecting the alleged consequence of mortal sin, obtained in Wycliffe their first advocate.²²

²² The last sentiment, is more prominently given in his reply to a question proposed a few years later by another parliament, (see chap. iv.) and it was to expose him to much misrepresentation, and inconvenienc.

CHAPTER III.

EDWARD'S INVASION OF FRANCE.—NATIONAL ANIMOSITIES PRODUCED BY IT.—ITS FAVOURABLE INFLUENCE ON THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION, AND ON THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH.—CHARACTER OF EDWARD THE THIRD, AND OF HIS COURT.—DEFECTS OF CHIVALRY.—JOHN OF GAUNT.—ON THE PROBABLE ORIGIN OF HIS CONNEXION WITH WYCLIFFE.—NOVEL AND ENLIGHTENED MEASURE OF THE ENGLISH PARLIAMENT.—ITS ACCORDANCE WITH THE DOCTRINE TAUGHT BY WYCLIFFE.—GROUND OF THE REFORMER'S OPPOSITION TO THE SECULARITY AND VICES OF THE CLERGY.—HIS VIEWS OF CLERICAL OBLIGATION.—ISSUE OF THE DISPUTE RESPECTING HIS WARDENSHIP.—BECOMES PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY.—IMPORTANCE OF THIS EVENT.—ANALYSIS OF HIS EXPOSITION OF THE DECALOGUE, AND EXTRACTS.

CHAP.
III.

1366.

1327.

EDWARD the third had reached the fiftieth year of his age, when Wycliffe became known to the English court by his first defence of the crown. The failings, or misfortunes, of the preceding monarch, had involved the youth of his son and successor in serious difficulties. But the young prince soon discovered that superior military genius, and that portion of capacity for government, which the dismembered state of the kingdom imperiously demanded from the sovereign. Still, through the former half of the long reign of Edward, his schemes of conquest, which every other arrangement was intended to subserve, had produced little beside mortification and embarrassment. No real advantage had resulted from his hostilities with Scotland; and the project of

securing the crown of France, which drew his attention so much from domestic affairs, and from the real interests of his people, had not only exposed him to the contempt of a powerful antagonist abroad, but to the murmurings of a neglected and impoverished community at home.

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Edward's
invasion of
France.

The reader, however, will remember, that the year 1346, is signalised in English history by the battle of Cressy. The lustre of that event so dazzled the sight of our ancestors, that the court of Edward became essentially warlike; and the same spirit was rapidly extended to every order of the people. A victory, which the skill of a few commanders, and the space of a single hour, appear to have determined, imparted a character to the political feelings and relations of Christendom, which is still perceived. Edward's ill-supported claim to the crown of France, had awakened an indignant feeling through that formidable kingdom; and the disasters of his earlier campaigns, in the hostile territory, had wounded his own pride, and that of his followers. In his subsequent victories, the chivalry of France was placed entirely at the feet of that of England; but such events could only serve to mature the enmity which had been thus excited between the two nations. Ten years had passed since the battle of Cressy, when the victory of Poitiers again exasperated the pride of the enemy. The king of Scotland, was already a prisoner in the tower of London; and the sovereign of France, was now placed at the head of the many illustrious captives found in the train of Edward the third. The

National
animosities
produced by
the war with
France.

1356.

CHAP. martial vanity of our ancestors was thus raised to
 III. the highest state of excitement, and all rational
 hope of political repose was placed at the farthest
 possible remove.

Influence of
 such wars on
 the English
 church and
 constitu-
 tion.

Humanity must deeply regret the national animosity which was thus produced, and the seeds of inveterate disorder which were thus sown through the fairest of the French provinces. But the dependence of Edward on the pleasure of his parliament for large supplies, and the removal of those antipathies which had so far divided the Saxon and Norman population of this country from the period of the conquest, were also among the consequences of this questionable policy. It is well known, that this augmented influence of parliament, and this closer binding of the commonwealth, entered not into the results of the French war as then anticipated by the prince or the people. But these were events, destined to contribute, in no small measure, to our national improvement. There was also another advantage, and one perhaps of even greater importance than the former, arising from this contest. During the reign of Edward, the pontiffs resided at Avignon; these, and their cardinals, were so commonly Frenchmen, as to create a dangerous alliance between the politics of France and those of the papal court; and the obvious partialities of the latter to the interests of the rival country, were a matter of general notoriety, and often of loud complaint.¹ The vacancies of

¹ During the interval between 1304 and 1378, the following pontiffs succeeded each other, and all were

Frenchmen. Clement V.; John XXII.; Benedict XII.; Clement VI.; Innocent VI.; Urban V., and Gregory XI.

the English church were frequently conferred on CHAP. III. foreigners, and often on the more dignified ecclesiastics of the rival country. But it was contended that, in such cases, the property of the nation was conveyed, by means of an iniquitous policy, to aid the resources of the enemy. These facts will, in some measure, explain the origin of the invective so often employed by the English parliament, during this period, when exposing the avarice and encroachments of the papacy; and if Wycliffe be justly revered as the parent of the English Reformation, these circumstances were certainly among the most important in imparting that efficiency to his labours.²

But Edward the third had never concerned himself very deeply with the pursuits of literature, and still less with the speculations of religion. His thirst for military ascendancy was such, as to leave him little time or disposition for better occupation. Through the former half of his reign, the king of England was not in circumstances to risk the serious displeasure of the pontiffs; and when the peace of Bretigni, had secured to him concessions which made him the most powerful monarch of Europe, he had reached that period of life, in which the most speculative men rarely embrace any novelties of opinion, either in religion, or in politics. Some years also before his

Character of
Edward the
third,

² See the avarice and encroachments of the Avignon popes, described by Mosheim, iii. 316—318. By a variety of mean and selfish contrivances, having “no other end than the acquisition of riches, these inconsiderate pou-

“tiffs excited a general hatred against the Roman see, and thereby greatly weakened the papal empire, which had been visibly upon the decline from the time of Boniface.”—Ibid.

CHAP. death, Edward's continental influence rapidly
 III. declined, leaving but the town of Calais, at the moment of his decease, as the fruit of his much celebrated victories. But during the interval of his prosperity, we have seen him indignantly refuse the census demanded by Urban; and farther withholding the more ancient tribute of Peter's-pence. Wycliffe he raised to the dignity of royal chaplain. The reformer's subsequent appointment, as one of the commissioners to negotiate with the delegates of the pontiff, as to the limits of the papal influence with respect to the patronage and temporalities of the English church, was also the deed of Edward; and a still farther promotion of John de Wycliffe was among the last acts of his life. It may be thought, therefore, that Edward the third proceeded as far in the cause of reformation, as could be justly anticipated—remembering the peculiarities of his character, the varying circumstances of his reign, his advanced age at the time of Wycliffe's appearance, and the wide, and hitherto almost unbroken, influence of ancient custom.

and of his
 court.

But if such was the extent of the aid to be expected from the monarch, it may be proper to enquire what farther encouragement was likely to be given to the efforts of a reformer, by the family of the sovereign, or by the court. Of Edward's children, five sons arrived to the state of manhood. But the decease of the elder, known by the name of the Black Prince, preceded that of his father, as did that of Lionel, duke of Clarence. The latter of these princes is described by his

contemporaries, as possessing every amiable quality; the former was the pride of chivalry. The ardour with which the heir-apparent sought the honours of knighthood, and the celebrity which he obtained, could hardly fail to render the pursuits of chivalry the object of peculiar devotion in the English court.

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To separate the good conferred by that departed system, from the evil which it as certainly produced, is difficult. It is described, and with a degree of truth, as the offspring of the feudal system; and as intended to redress, by the exercise of a generous valour, the wrongs which were every where inflicted, and which too commonly defied the weak provisions of law. As an apostle of equity, each knight bound himself by the solemnities of honour and religion, to vindicate the injured at every personal hazard, and to cherish a special deference for the female character. In a state of society where there was little that could deteriorate, an additional rein was thus placed on the neck of violence. It is also obvious, that some good must have resulted from an institution, which, at such a period, created a reverence for acknowledged justice, and which enjoined a generosity of temper, and a courtesy of manner, equally above the spirit of the times. Still the benefits conferred by chivalry were limited, almost entirely, to the aristocracy of the nations.³ Humanity, in its nobler meaning, was

Defects of
chivalry.

³ Mr. Hume appears unusually interested in his story, when describing the courtesies of the Black Prince to-

ward the illustrious captives secured by the victory of Poitiers. But the soldier who could be so considerate of

CHAP. without the circle of its sympathies. With its
 III. sentiments of love and honour, refined even to
 sickness and childhood,⁴ it frequently united a heart, as unsparing in its cruelty, as that of the tiger or the cannibal. And if it enjoined a most devout attention to the laws of a physical dexterity, and a most patient endurance of bodily suffering, it can hardly be said to have made the least provision for the culture of the mind. Hence, before the advances of literature, the reveries of knighthood every where disappeared. It may be true, that it softened the deportment of the warrior in his intercourse with females; but it is quite as certain, that it failed to impose any effective check on his licentious inclinations.⁵ From the period

the feelings of royalty and knighthood, has the less to urge in defence of cruelties inflicted on inferior classes, who still were men. Froissart concludes his description of the ferocious scene, which was followed by this display of urbanity, with observing, that "the prince of Wales, who was courageous and cruel as a lion, took great pleasure this day in fighting and chasing his enemies." This sentence is eminently characteristic of the far-famed spirit of knighthood. The conduct of the same hero toward the citizens of Limoges, is a fact, amid multitudes in history, showing the scorn of plebeian suffering which the system not only perpetuated but in a great degree produced. The knights on that occasion were indebted for their lives to their valour and their rank. The people were slaughtered without pity, even three thousand men, women, and children! The historian last cited, though by no means burdened with sympathy for the humbler portions of any community, could

not pass from this scene of butchery without exclaiming, "The Lord have mercy on their souls, for they were verily martyrs."

⁴ Concerning the mistress of the knight, a modern writer gravely states, "She was the deity he adored; she was the religion for which he fought, and was ready to spill the last drop of his blood; her safety he was to watch over with exhaustless vigilance; her injuries to avenge; and her reputation, whether for beauty or for honour, to assert and defend.—Godwin's *Life of Chaucer*, ii. 286. In this language, however strange it may sound, the author has failed to descend to half the absurdity of his subject. Thus Froissart names a band of youthful knights who sallied forth to the wars in France, wearing a bandage over one eye, resolving to see only with the other, until their prowess should have won the favour of their ladies. *Hist.* i. 33.

⁵ Mr. Hallam has touched the vices of chivalry with a tender hand, but

of the crusades, both superstition and gallantry— or, in the strange language of this institute, “ God “ and the Ladies,”—are in every nation appealed to, as lending their most sacred sanctions to the profession of knighthood. As the result, we see war receiving the only addition which may add to its general turpitude, *i. e.* a mixture of religion; while, among females, a veneration of martial achievement is excited, to a degree hitherto unknown. The influence of woman, which is never so appropriately employed as in preventing violence, or mitigating suffering, became, in this way, a principal incentive to both.⁶ In the mystic rites by which this order was conferred, the priest, and the mistress of the devotee, performed their part; and deeds of slaughter were henceforth to be honoured as acts of devotion, and the whole atrocity of war was to be metamorphosed into a show, or a game. The extent of the misery thus produced may be conjectured, but cannot be ascertained.⁷ History also records, that if chi-

observes that the impurity of its morals is not to be denied. “ In the amusing “ fictions which seem to have been the “ only popular reading of the middle “ ages, there reigns a licentious spirit, “ not of that lighter kind which is usual “ in such compositions, but indicating “ a general dissoluteness in the inter- “ course of the sexes.” iii. 491.

⁶ Our countess of Salisbury, and Philippa, the queen of Edward the third, Jane de Montford, of Britany, and the wife of Charles de Blois, are among the females, contemporary with Froissart, who became so far imbued with the feeling of chivalry, as to be equal, in cases of emergency, to daring

exploits at the head of armies.—Hist. i. 77, 81, 137, 139, 143.

⁷ The very imperfect standard of equity, by which knights were commonly guided, may be inferred from the fact that the life of the “ Mirror “ of knighthood” was devoted, and a constitution of unusual strength wholly wasted, in two struggles, for neither of which could any plea, either of policy or justice, be adduced. The sceptre of France was plainly the lawful property of its possessor, and Peter, of Castile, was a monster on whom the abhorrence of contemporaries justly conferred the designation of “ the cruel.” Yet to dethrone the French

CHAP. III. valry ever supplied the defects of legal administration, its customs soon proved the most obstinate barrier in the path of all judicial improvement; an effect, indeed, which is perhaps inseparable, soon or late, from most political institutions, as matters adjusted to particular states of society, and which naturally retain something of their ancient authority, when their period of usefulness has closed.

In the Black Prince, the virtues of knighthood, which are mostly doubtful, and its defects, which are sufficiently obvious, were all exhibited. It was not from a mind formed in such a mould, nor from its very passionate admirers, that any powerful aid was to be expected, in so grave a matter as the restoration of the Christian religion to its primitive purity. In the court, however, of Edward the third, and with too many of the English people, the attributes, distinguishing the hero of Cressy and Poitiers, were revered as the most exalted pertaining to humanity. Yet even in that court, and through the nation too, there were men who applied themselves to the science of government, and who, from the various motives of interest, of patriotism, or religion, were prepared to question the general policy of the church.

Notice of
John of
Gaunt.

Among these persons, a conspicuous place must be assigned to John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster; the only son of Edward the third whose name is connected with the religion of the period, and who

monarch, and to restore a being, proverbial for his perfidy and crime, to the possession of his former power,

were the purposes which absorbed the life and energies of Prince Edward!

is known as the patron of Chaucer and of Wycliffe. CHAP.
III.
 The character of this illustrious personage is variously delineated by our ancient historians; in the present narrative, we shall allow his conduct to disclose his pretensions. He was born at Ghent, in the year 1340, sixteen years subsequent to the birth of our reformer. As earl of Richmond, and at the age of twenty-two, he succeeded to the title of his deceased father-in-law, Henry, duke of Lancaster, and to estates which rendered him the most opulent tenant of the crown. An intercourse with Chaucer, which appears to have commenced with his boyhood, inspired him with a taste for literature; but the restless spirit of the times, hurried him in search of the laurels of knighthood, both in Scotland and in France. His genius and his courage were unquestionable; but no splendid achievement, like those allotted to his senior brother, was to mark his career. This circumstance was probably advantageous to himself and to his country. Had he acquired celebrity in arms, his entire capacity would probably have been devoted to the occupations of the soldier; and those serious questions of domestic policy, both in church and state, to which his talents, and his influence, were so efficiently applied, may have been wholly overlooked.

It would be pleasing to ascertain the precise period in which the favour of John of Gaunt was first bestowed on Wycliffe, and to know the circumstances which led to so important a connexion. This, however, is one of those points in the reformer's history, over which time has thrown a

On the probable origin of his connexion with Wycliffe.

CHAP. III. veil that I fear is not to be removed. It is said that he became known to the duke by his defence of the crown, which appeared some time subsequent to the year 1366, and we have nothing in our sources of information opposed to this statement. Indeed, his attendance on the parliament of that year, and his subsequent possession of his title as royal chaplain, are circumstances which render it probable, that he had become known to his distinguished patron, even before the publication of his opinions on the question of the census.

It has been stated by my predecessor, Mr. Lewis, as unquestionable, that Wycliffe dedicated a collection of his works to the Duke of Lancaster, in 1368.⁶ This statement is made, I presume, on the authority of a notice, prefixed to a volume of the reformer's manuscripts preserved in the library of Trinity college, Dublin, and which I find is attributed to archbishop Usher. But nearly the whole of the pieces in that volume contain allusions to facts, not to mention the developments of opinion, which clearly prove them to belong to a much later period. One piece only in the series can be said to possess evidence of a date so early as the year 1368, and that is the document from which some extracts are given at the close of the first chapter in the present work. The introductory treatise in the collection, along the upper line of which the notice adverted to is written, is certainly the production of a period subsequent to the papal schism. Had

1380.

⁶ Life of Wiclif, p. 20.

Mr. Lewis found it convenient to visit the metropolis of the sister kingdom, for the purpose of ascertaining what the productions were, in behalf of which the protection of Lancaster was solicited,—a point of some importance, in consequence of the early date attributed to them,—he would readily have detected the error of his informant.⁹

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By what means so excellent a scholar as archbishop Usher was misled I know not;¹⁰ but this mistake, with some others, is copied into a printed catalogue of the manuscript library of Trinity college, which lies on the table of the Bodleian; and received without hesitation, by Mr. Lewis, it has been adopted by writers without number.¹¹

But while it has been an error to describe the reformer as dedicating certain of his works to the duke of Lancaster, in 1368, the known activity of his disposition forbids our considering him as

Novel measure of the English parliament in 1371.

⁹ Indeed, were the pieces adverted to of the date which Mr. Lewis has assigned to them, the mind of Wycliffe in 1368 would be found to have been precisely what it was about 1350;—a conclusion, which, however generally it may have been formed, is contrary to fact. On this supposition, also, the chief incidents in the reformer's life would remain to be considered under very different impressions from those with which we are now called to regard them.—MSS. Dub. class. c. tab. 3. No. 12. Of the contents of this volume, the reader will judge from the fact, that the pieces 1—19 in the catalogue of the reformer's writings (vol. ii.) are included in them. Note to the second edition.

sulted the judgment of Dr. Sadler, the esteemed librarian of Trinity college, who expressed himself satisfied, that the writing was that of the Archbishop, but slightly altered from his usual hand, by an effort to write well. Note to the second edition.

¹¹ The writer of an extended critique on these volumes, in the Church of Ireland Magazine, has stated that I had overlooked some letters in the Dublin MSS. written by Wycliffe even before the death of Armachanus (1360). To have discovered such documents would have been highly gratifying; but it appears upon examination, that the MS. alluded to does not admit of being attributed to our reformer.—Note to the second edition.

¹⁰ In examining the volume, I con-

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unemployed at any season. It is not, however, until the meeting of parliament, in 1371, that we become again aware of his influence in connexion with any public event. In that assembly, a change was attempted, altogether new in our parliamentary history, and one which could scarcely have been contemplated, except under a decline of that superstitious homage which had been so long rendered to the clergy.¹² The exclusion of all persons belonging to that order, from those offices of state which had been almost invariably possessed by churchmen, was the altered policy demanded. Nor was this novel requisition urged in consequence of any peculiar incompetency in the existing officers, so much as on the general principle, of an impropriety in allowing men avowedly devoted to the spiritual welfare of the nation, to become absorbed in the management of affairs altogether secular.¹³ These matters, it was urged, pertained to secular men; nor was it any longer to be admitted that their capacities were unequal to such a charge. The effort to produce this important change in the character of the government, is attributed by historians to the secret influence of John of Gaunt. In the writings of Wycliffe also, there is no evil more frequently, or more feelingly, deplored, than that which this measure was designed to remove. It is one, therefore, which may deserve a passing notice.

Its accordance with a favourite doctrine of Wycliffe.

¹² Fox has assigned too early a date to this event, but observes, "that through the motion of the lords in parliament, and partly (as witnesseth mine author) for hatred of the clergy

"also, the said offices were removed from the clergy to the lords temporal."—Acts and Monuments, i. 547.

¹³ Cotton's Abridgment, 45 Edward III.

In the age of our reformer, the mind capable of viewing the religious claims of men at all as they are exhibited in the sacred writings, must have seen much to lament in customs which were daily sanctioned, even by the most reputable classes of churchmen. It has appeared, that the conversion of the western nations was followed by the elevation of the clergy to all the more important civil offices. England had so far conformed to the times in this respect, that at the period of Wycliffe's intimacy with the Duke of Lancaster, the state was scarcely less under the controul of the prelates than the church. The offices of lord chancellor and lord treasurer, and those of keeper and clerk of the privy seal, were filled by clergymen. The master of the rolls, the masters in chancery, and the chancellor and chamberlain of the exchequer, were also dignitaries, or beneficed persons of the same order. One priest was treasurer for Ireland, and another for the marshes of Calais; and while the parson of Oundle is employed as surveyor to the king's buildings, the parson of Harwick is called to the superintendence of the royal wardrobe. It is known also, that worldly occupations still less consistent with the credit and sanctity of the clerical profession, were not unfrequently found in connexion with it.¹⁴

Wycliffe saw these practices confirmed, by the example of men whose names were honoured in their generation; but to eradicate the evil, was an object to which he applied his most powerful

CHAP.
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Ground of his opposition to existing corruptions.

¹⁴ Collier's Hist. i. 438, 460.

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reasoning, and some of his severest rebukes.¹⁵ It had roused his indignation so early as in the year 1356, and in his latest compositions the pernicious custom is assailed with an ardour augmented rather than diminished. That the assumption of this motley character, was indeed incompatible with the faithful discharge of clerical duty, may now be sufficiently obvious. But the history of the church discloses, that through many centuries previous to the age of the English reformer, inconsistency was rarely, if at all, perceived in this mixture of the secular power with the spiritual. To detect this evil as it was detected by Wycliffe, required much christian discernment, and unusual independence of thinking. And to avow his doctrine on this point, opposed as it was to prevailing and deep-rooted custom, and, above all, to the secular spirit of the existing priesthood, required that the intrepidity of the reformer should keep pace with his intelligence.

¹⁵ The following extract in reference to Wycliffe, and the reformation contemplated by the parliament in 1371, though in some respects inaccurate, is worth transcribing. "It appeareth by such as have observed the order and course of times, that this Wycliffe flourished about the year of our Lord 1371, Edward the third reigning in England; for this we do find in the chronicles of Caxton:—'In the year of our Lord 1371, (saith he) Edward the third, king of England, in his parliament, was against the pope's clergie. He willingly hearkened and gave ear to the voices and tales of heretics, with certain of his counsell; conceiving and following

"sinister opinions against the clergie. Wherefore, afterwards, he tasted and suffered much adversity and trouble. And not long after, in the year of our Lord 1372, he wrote unto the bishop of Rome, that he should not, by any means, intermeddle any more within his kingdom, as touching the reservation or distribution of benefices; and that all such bishops as were under his dominion, should enjoy their former and ancient liberty, and be confirmed of their metropolitanes, as hath been accustomed in times past.'" — Fox. Acts and Monuments, ubi supra.

Nor is it consonant with reason, any more than with religion, to attach a marked suspicion to the ardour which may be evinced in attempting the overthrow of a moral structure so much at variance with every notion of moral propriety. The christian must consider the gospel as sufficiently attested to make the reception of it a duty. Hence, should he view an unbeliever as sincere, he cannot forbear to question his integrity with respect to the means of conviction. But it is curious to observe, how confidently the opponent of the gospel anticipates the meed of good intention while seeking its total overthrow; and how commonly he withholds that award from the more discriminate zeal, which spares religion while assailing its corruptions. The cause of this, however, can hardly be a secret. Christianity is disposed of with little difficulty, while concealed under the thick veil of its abuses. It is when separated from these that it assumes a perplexing aspect; such indeed, as to render the reformer of religion, a much less attractive object on the stage of history, in the view of some writers, than the crowd of priests or statesmen, who have conspired to vitiate its principles, and thus to impair its fame. It is admitted, however, that the mind which has received the culture necessary to appreciate the beauties of art, is offended by every false combination, and by every trace of rudeness or deformity. And it certainly is not less evident that the perceptions and feelings of men in relation to morals, and to the gradations of piety, are susceptible of similar discipline and improvement. If

CHAP. there be a difference here, we may presume, for
 III.
 various reasons, that it will be in favour of the moral capacities. Accordingly, the harmonious in human life, the beautiful in religious devotedness, may become no less attractive to the reflecting man, than the same properties as distinguishing the works of art. From the zeal for improvement also, as thus excited, though directed to very different objects, there may arise the same dissatisfaction with imperfect attainment, and in all respects the same severity of criticism. We honour the man who has struggled to separate the literature of a nation from the inroads of barbarism; or to distinguish, for the benefit of others, between the truths of science, and the pernicious dogmas of the alchymist, or of the astrologer. And it remains to be shewn, why the same reverence, at least, is not due to the man who performs a more perilous service, with the hope of exhibiting religion apart from superstition; and that because he regards the latter as the source of whatever can degrade his species, and the former as having the nearest connexion with the best discipline, both of the understanding and the heart.

His views of ministerial obligations.

Such has been the character of the most distinguished reformers of the christian religion; and such, in a peculiar degree, was the culture of the mind which led the way in the English reformation. Wycliffe's acquaintance with the compositions of devout men, and especially with the writings of inspired teachers, had contributed to place human nature before him in all the defor-

mity and ruin of its lapsed condition; and had, CHAP.
III. at the same time, disclosed to him the moral love-

liness of the state in which it first stood, and to which, by the influence of the gospel, it may yet be restored. They are matters of this commanding character which constitute the christian doctrine, and if true, it is plain that it possesses an importance, very far surpassing what may be attached to any other portion of truth, or indeed to all other truth. By Wycliffe, this doctrine was contemplated with the liveliest interest, and embraced with no feeble confidence. Hence, while his improved understanding might be offended by barbarian customs, or his humanity by acts of oppression; his love of religion—as of that which included whatever might most contribute to the honour of the Deity and the welfare of mankind—would clothe the practices of the indolent and the worldly among the christian priesthood, with a character so revolting, as to render his loudest reproof but the partial utterance of the most honest indignation. If these considerations are borne in mind, the reader will not perhaps be surprised at the apparent severity of the reformer's language, when exposing the vices of the clergy. Such men were viewed by him, as set apart for the sole purpose of becoming the religious instructors of the community, and their guides to the promised immortality. The shepherd, however, was often seen resigning his flock to ignorance and destruction, that his own passion for secular dignity, or worldly gain, might be indulged; and to witness these

CHAP. fatal declensions, without denouncing them as in
 111. the last degree iniquitous, was, in the judgment
 of Wycliffe, to share in the guilt thus incurred.

In one of his earlier pieces, intitled, "A
 " Short Rule of Life," it is thus he addresses the
 minister of religion: " If thou art a priest, and
 " by name a curate, live thou a holy life. Pass
 " other men in holy prayer, holy desire, and holy
 " speaking; in counselling and teaching the truth.
 " Ever keep the commandments of God, and let
 " his gospel, and his praises, be ever in thy mouth.
 " Ever despise sin, that men may be drawn there-
 " from, and that thy deeds may be so far rightful,
 " that no man shall blame them with reason. Let
 " thy open life be thus a true book, in which the
 " soldier and the layman may learn how to serve
 " God, and keep his commandments. For the
 " example of a good life, if it be open, and con-
 " tinued, striketh rude men much more than
 " open preaching with the word alone. And waste
 " not thy goods in great feasts for rich men, but
 " live a frugal life, on poor men's alms and goods.
 " Have both meat, and drink, and clothing, but
 " the remnant give truly to the poor; to those
 " who have freely wrought, but who now may
 " not labour from feebleness or sickness; and
 " thus thou shalt be a true priest, both to God
 " and to man."¹⁶ While such were the views of
 Wycliffe as to the obligations of the clerical

¹⁶ The above extract I have copied from a manuscript volume in the Bodleian, including numerous extracts transcribed from the reformer's writings by Dr. James. The substance of

the passage, and in the same terms, is in an early comment of Wycliffe's on the decalogue, (Cotton. MSS. Titus, D. xix. 122.) This piece will presently claim our attention.

vocation; a removal of the clergy from all secular offices, whether in the household, or in the cabinet, of the monarch, could not fail to appear to him as of the highest importance to their true reputation, and to the cause of religion. "He that warreth, entangleth not himself with this life," is the language of St. Paul, and was often cited by our reformer as denoting the abstraction from worldly solitudes, which it should be the aim of christian pastors to preserve. It was his zeal, as the advocate of these and similar doctrines, which, three years later, provoked the serious displeasure of the English prelacy, and of the papal court, involving him in all the perils of a conflict with their united strength.¹⁷

The power of John of Gaunt at this time, and his known dislike of this obtrusive ambition in the higher clergy, oblige us to believe that the proposed measure was subject to his sanction; and it bears upon it a signature, which warrants our attributing it, in some degree, to the influence of a man whose genius and acquirements the duke considered as unrivalled.

¹⁷ That Wycliffe's attacks upon the clergy, were not of that indiscriminate character which has been sometimes insinuated, is evident from many of his writings. The following extract is from a piece composed about this period. "Thy second father, is thy spiritual father, who has special care of thy soul, and thus thou shalt worship him. Thou shalt love him especially before other men, and obey his teaching as far as he teaches God's will. And thou shalt help, according to thy power, that he

"have a reasonable sustenance when he doth well his office. And if he fail in his office, by giving evil example, and in ceasing from teaching God's law, thou art bound to have great sorrow on that account, and to tell meekly and charitably his default to him between thee and him alone." — Cotton. MSS. Titus, D. xix. 122. If Wycliffe ever sanctioned less mild or less scriptural methods of reform, it was because the state of the malady was found to require a severer treatment.

CHAP.
III.

The fact, also, of its being introduced while Lancaster was absent from the kingdom, is a proof that there were leaders in the parliament of 1371, who were equally concerned to limit the attention of the clergy to the spiritualities of their office. In their petition, indeed, the members of that assembly appear to have been unanimous; and they hesitate not to specify the various offices hitherto sustained by churchmen, and which they would have vacated without delay. The language of Wycliffe on this subject is equally definite; including not only the spirit, but nearly the words of this memorable remonstrance. "Neither prelates," he observes, "nor doctors, "priests, nor deacons, should hold secular offices, "that is, those of chancery, treasury, privy seal, "and other such secular offices in the exchequer. Neither be stewards of lands, nor stewards of the hall, nor clerks of the kitchen, nor "clerks of accounts, neither be occupied in any "secular office in lord's courts, more especially "while secular men are sufficient to do such "offices."¹⁸ In support of this doctrine, an appeal is made to the various writings of St. Gregory, St. Chrysostom, and St. Jerome, and to the apostolic decrees; also to the advice of St. Paul to the Corinthians, and to the solemn ad-

¹⁸ *Ecclesiæ Regimen*. Cotton. MSS. Titus, D. i. The substance of this work is no doubt the production of Wycliffe, but the copy in the British Museum has been transcribed, and in one or two instances interpolated, subsequent to his death. Much of its sentiment and language occurs

in his work on prelates, and in various other pieces. There is a second copy among the MSS. of Trinity college, Dublin. I should have examined it, but, unfortunately, it was mislaid, at the time of my connexion with that library.

monitions of the Saviour, addressed to his immediate disciples. In another treatise, he writes, that "prelates, and great religious possessioners, "are so occupied in heart about worldly lordships, and with pleas of business, that no habit of devotion, of praying, of thoughtfulness on heavenly things, on the sins of their own heart, or on those of other men, may be preserved; neither may they be found studying and preaching of the gospel, nor visiting and comforting of poor men."¹⁹ The consequence, accordingly, of tolerating churchmen, as "rich clerks of the chancery, of the commons' bench, and king's bench, and the exchequer, and as justices, and sheriffs, and stewards, and bailiffs,"²⁰ is said to be, that they become themselves so worldly, as to be in no state to reprove the worldliness of others. These opinions were propagated with so much success, that in the reformer's popular tract on the question, "Why poor priests have no benefices," he explains this fact as arising, in a great degree, from the objections felt by the more conscientious of that order, to the practice of lay patrons, who persisted in diverting them from their proper calling, by appointing them to hold "vain offices in their courts." He states also, in the same work, and as the consequence of the general custom adverted to, that when vacancies occurred, the influence of patrons

¹⁹ MS. C. C. C. Cambridge, beginning, "For three skills lords should constrain clerks to live in meekness, willful poverty, and ghostly travail."

²⁰ *Ibid.* In expressing the worldly

business of clerks at another time, he describes them as resembling "bailiffs rather than bishops."—MS. of Feigned Contemplative Life, Dublin, class c. tab. 3. No. 12.

CHAP. was commonly employed in favour of some shrewd
III. collector of the pope's pence, or of "a kitchen
" clerk, or one wise in building castles, or in
" worldly business."²¹ In the last expression,
there is an evident reference to William of
Wykeham, the celebrated bishop of Winchester,
— a prelate whose skill in architecture and
finance had recommended him to the favour of
Edward; and whose removal from the office of
chancellor, was an event particularly contem-
plated by the novel measure adopted in the pre-
sent parliament.

On receiving this petition, the king replied,
that he would act respecting it with the advice
of his council. But in the following month,
Wykeham resigned his office of chancellor, and
the bishop of Exeter ceased to be the treasurer
of the realm. The partial success of this bold
attempt to restrict the government of the king-
dom to the hands of the laity, and to limit the
cares of the clergy to the spiritual necessities of
their flock, could not be known as in agreement
with the favourite doctrine of Wycliffe, without
exposing him to the increased resentment of his
own order. It is at this time impossible to de-
termine the extent in which the labours of our
reformer had served to produce the feeling which
gave existence, and so much effect, to a petition
that must have been regarded as deeply offensive
to churchmen. To know, however, that such a
feeling existed, would be sufficient to induce the
established clergy to associate every conceivable

²¹ MS. C. C. C. Cambridge.

mischief with the future activities of Wycliffe. CHAP.
III.
If the representatives of the English people had discovered propensities so dangerous, it was but just to conclude, that the provinces were equally impregnated with inflammable material; and the labours of this factious teacher would be seen as tending to effect the ignition of the whole.²²

It was at this period, that Wycliffe's dispute respecting the wardenship of Canterbury hall came under the notice of the king.²³ It had been submitted to the decision of the pontiff in 1367, but the definite sentence was suspended until the year 1370. The reader will scarcely be surprised to learn, that the termination of this suit was favourable to Woodhall and the monks—confirming the sentence of exclusion, which had been passed on the reformer, and on the secular scholars by Langham. That Wycliffe had derived his office from the will of the founder was unquestionable; but to bow the decrees of the living and the dead to its pleasure, had long been the practice of the papal court. It is probable that the reformer had fully anticipated this issue of

Issue of the disputes respecting his wardenship.

1370.

²² Rymer, vi. 45 Edw. III. This evil, however, was too deeply rooted to be suddenly eradicated. It is thus that Latimer deplores it as the evil of his times. "It is a thing to be lamented, that the prelates, and other spiritual persons, will not attend upon their offices. They will not be amongst their flocks, but rather will run hither and thither, here and there, where they are not called, and in the mean season leave them at adventure of whom they take their living. Yea, and furthermore,

"some would rather be clerks of the kitchen, or take other offices upon them beside that which they have already. But with what conscience these same do so, I cannot tell."—Sermons, folio, p. 171.

²³ It is singular that the name of Wycliffe does not occur in the papal document, though of considerable extent, and drawn up with no little caution. Nor is this the only suspicious circumstance connected with it.—Appendix, No. IX.

CHAP. III. the question. So little was he affected by it, that I am not aware of a single reference to it in any of his writings. It may be supposed, however, that the recollection of the event would sometimes sharpen his invectives, as directed against similar proceedings on the part of the same authority. His opponents, also, appear to have been conscious of the illegality of their triumph, and became seriously concerned, as the extent of their bribe demonstrates, to render it secure by obtaining a confirmation of it from the king. This effort, indeed, was not made until nearly two years after the decision of the pope had been procured; and we should not err, perhaps, in attributing the alarm which it implies, to a perception of Wycliffe's growing influence among his countrymen. Edward the third was now sinking under the infirmities of age, and still more under the embarrassments in which his attempts to possess the crown of France had involved both himself and the nation. Of the manner in which his sanction of this papal verdict was obtained, we are ignorant—excepting that among the means employed by Woodhall, and his companions, for that purpose, was the sum of two hundred marks. A donation not less considerable, may be presumed to have facilitated the same cause in another court, the avarice of which had been for ages proverbial.²⁴

Obtains his degree as doctor in divinity.

Wycliffe must now have relinquished all hope

²⁴ Mr. Lewis estimates the two hundred marks at about a thousand pounds of our present money. C. i. Wycliffe's zeal as a reformer has been often de-

scribed by his enemies as arising from resentment under the loss of this suit. The falsehood is too palpable to need exposure.

of recovering the preferment thus wrested from him. But his genius was of a character to create other channels through which to extend its influence. In the ensuing year, he performed his novitiate for the degree of doctor in divinity. In the fourteenth century that dignity was less frequently conferred by our universities than in later times; and from the persons receiving it there was a kind of generosity expected, which failed not to commend itself to the more convivial inmates of colleges. How far Wycliffe conformed to the custom of the age in this respect we are ignorant.²⁵ His elevation to the chair of theology in the leading university of the kingdom, opened an important field for the diffusion of his opinions, and has rendered the year 1372 a memorable period in his history. From that chair many of his scholastic pieces, still extant, were doubtless read; but these, though they contributed to increase his reputation among contemporaries, and thus facilitated the progress of his more important opinions, possess, at this day, but a very limited value, even to the student of history. Among his compositions produced about this time, is an extended exposition of the decalogue; and as this work is known to the public only by its title, some extracts from it, with a general notice of its contents, may not be unacceptable to the reader; especially as it will enable him to judge of the theological opinions, and of the

CHAP.
III.

1371.

Importance
of that
event.

²⁵ Leland de Script. Brit. 379. Wood's Ann. Lewis. The paper read on the occasion adverted to, is be-

lieved to be in the imperial library of Vienna.—Baber, p. 41.

CHAP. devotional feeling, which the reformer brought
 III. to the discharge of his duties as divinity profes-
 ——— sor.²⁶

Analysis of
 his exposi-
 tion of the
 decalogue.

The summary of our obligations with respect to man, and the Creator, contained in the ten precepts delivered to Moses on the mount, has formed an important part of the instruction presented in the services of the church through every age. The prominence supposed to have been given to it in the papal ritual during the middle ages, has been often appealed to as a circumstance that must have been inseparable from much moral and political benefit. It ought not, however, to be forgotten, that through that long interval, the real import of the moral law was understood but very imperfectly. During this time also the machinery of the established superstitions was artfully adjusted

²⁶ The particulars which induce me to assign this early date to the commentary referred to, are various. 1. Though extensive, it contains not the remotest reference to the controversies respecting the eucharist, or the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular tongue; questions which, as soon as they arose, became so much the matter of discussion as to find their way into every production of the reformer's pen, which was at all extended. 2. It includes certain statements of doctrine which are much more obscured by the errors of the times, than others relating to the same points supplied by Wycliffe's subsequent writings. It should, however, be stated, that with the exception of the word purgatory, which occurs once afterwards, the only sentiments expressed in the present work, to which a modern protestant would ob-

ject, are contained in the paragraph introductory to the first precept. The writer there sanctions the use of images in less cautious terms than at a later period, and prayer to saints is not only recognized as an important exercise, but is left wholly unrestricted. Two years from this time, Wycliffe was called to the continent, and in a homily which appears to have been composed immediately after his return, he condemns the practice of offering prayer to any saint, whose admission to heaven is not affirmed in the scriptures, and discloses a suspicion as to the real utility of such services, even when referring to such persons —Bib. Reg. 18. b. 14. Ecclesiæ Regimen. art. 10. A little subsequently, the entire practice was discountenanced as the offspring of folly, and as diverting the mind from the "One Mediator."—*Dialogus*, iii. 30.

to deprive the precept of nearly all its power, by disclosing innumerable means of escape from its penalty. We learn, indeed, from the prologue to the commentary now referred to, that in the fourteenth century, it was no rare event for men “to call God, master, forty, three score, or four score years; and yet to be ignorant of his ten commandments.” To induce an attention to the divine precepts, Wycliffe reminds his reader, “that poor and helpless as he had entered the world, he must soon depart from it, having nothing with him but his good deeds or his wicked.” The latter also, he forcibly describes as leading “to the pains of hell,” and the former, as connecting the nature of man with “the high bliss of heaven.” “We should be diligent,” he observes, “to learn the love of God, and to fear him, and to worship him passing all things in this world. But this may we not do, without seriously learning the law of God, and his commandments. Hence, there is full great need to hear the commandments of God read, and preached, and taught, and so to learn them, and do after them, as God hath bidden on pain of damnation. But what man is there now-a-days who feareth to break God’s commandments, or setteth any prize by the sweetest word in all God’s law? Dear God! it is a wonder of all the wonders on earth, that from the beginning of our life, even to our last end, we are never weary, either night or day, in labouring for worldly goods, pleasing to our wretched body,

CHAP. III. “ which shall here last but a little season ; while
 “ about the learning of God’s law, which shall be
 “ food and nourishment for our souls, that either
 “ in bliss or pain shall ever last — about such
 “ things, may we not labour truly to the end, for
 “ one hour of the day !” This thoughtlessness with
 respect to religion, he deploras as observable “ for
 “ the most part through all the world,” not ex-
 cepting “ lord bishops, parsons, vicars, priests,
 “ and friars.”

In his explanation of the first precept, sensuality, covetousness, and pride, are particularly noticed, as opposed to the homage and the love so justly demanded by the Creator. It then follows : “ if a man will keep this commandment,
 “ he must believe stedfastly, that Almighty God
 “ in Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy
 “ Ghost, three persons in one God, are the noblest
 “ object that may have being,—all power, all wit,
 “ all wisdom, all mercy, all charity, and all good-
 “ ness, being in him, and coming of him. Also,
 “ thou must fear God above all things in this world,
 “ and break his commandments for the sake of
 “ no worldly good ; also, thou must love God above
 “ all things, and thy neighbour as thyself ; labour-
 “ ing diligently to understand the law of God,
 “ especially his ten commandments, and watching
 “ that thy will be so regulated, that it may accord
 “ with God’s will. Have a remembrance, too, of
 “ the goodness of God, how he made thee in his
 “ own likeness, and how Jesus Christ, both God
 “ and man, died so painful a death upon the cross,

“ to buy man’s soul out of hell, even with his own CHAP.
 “ heart’s blood, and to bring it to the bliss of III.
 “ heaven !”

While such are the motives by which the love of God is enforced, on the second commandment he remarks, that “ all who would be called “ christians, while they live contrary to the living “ and teaching of Christ and his apostles, take “ God’s name in vain : for it is in vain, that “ a man say he is a christian man, and do nothing “ of the works of Christ.” Perjury and profane swearing are loudly censured as violations of this precept. The iniquity of the former is said to be, that it makes the God of truth, an abettor of falsehood ; the latter is noticed as opposed to certain canons, which menaced the offending clerk with the loss of his dignity, and the layman with excommunication. But the writer appeals with greater solemnity to the language of the Saviour, in his sermon on the mount. This he delivers as “ Christ’s “ own words in his gospel,” and immediately adds, “ therefore for the love of Christ, who for you “ shed his blood, beware henceforth, night and “ day, of your oath’s swearing.” His replies to certain excuses, which were urged to extenuate this vice, present a fair specimen of his more popular style of reasoning. Thus it was stated as proper, to have God always in remembrance ; and hence it was said to be a less fault to use his name somewhat irreverently, than that it should seem to be treated with neglect. This shallow pretext he compares to the conduct of a subject, who should make a virtue of frequently repeating

CHAP. the name “of a just prince, though it might be
 III. “to betray him, or to teach others to despise him.”
 ———

When the practice is vindicated as the effect of habit, the plea is coupled with that of a thief, who should appeal to his confirmed love of depredation as an extenuation of some particular offence. It is admitted that God is merciful, but when it is inferred, that “he will not therefore damn men “for a light oath,” the partial view of the divine attributes and government which the conclusion implies, is thus solemnly exposed: “Since God “is so great a Lord, and commandeth his liege “man, on pain of hell without end, to keep so easy “a command as refraining his tongue from vain “and false swearing, is he not worthy to be “damned the deeper, if he break it? It was little “in Adam. to eat an apple in paradise, considered “apart from the bidding of God. Nevertheless, “for the eating it against the forbidding of God, “he and all mankind were justly condemned, “until Christ bought them again, with his precious blood, and hard death upon the cross!” The assertion, that to swear, was necessary to be believed, is disposed of with equal effect; and here it is especially regretted, that at a period when almost every sentence uttered by men was an oath, this impiety remained unchecked, even among the servants and retainers of the prelates themselves, though an order of men ordained to teach the law of God, and to see it enforced. “Certainly,” he exclaims, “it is a wonder, “apart from the endless mercy of God, that the “earth openeth not, and swalloweth them quick

“into hell, for this treason and others be-
 “side.”²⁷

CHAP.
 III.

On the third commandment, he remarks, that the sabbath is a day that should be spent “in three manners of occupations.” These occupations are explained, as including devout meditation, public worship, and the works of charity. His maxims on the last named division of christian duty, bespeak the kindness of his heart; and must have given a marked peculiarity to the manners of his followers, if truly adopted by them. His instructions in relation to public worship, require the most humiliating acknowledgments of guilt, and of spiritual helplessness, and urge the worshipper in his approaches to God, “to cry heartily unto him for grace and succour.” To aid the reflections of the devout mind, during the hours of this sacred day, he enjoins that it be then especially remembered, “that God is almighty—Why?—Because he made all this world of nought. That he is all-wise—Why?—Because he governs most wisely all things.

²⁷ The piety of Wycliffe appears to have been particularly shocked by the profanity of the times in this respect. It is thus that he again appeals to such offenders: “But how shalt thou, sinful wretch, dare stand before Christ at the dreadful day of doom, while his hands, his side, his feet, and his wounds are all open and bloody, and wait to be saved at that dreadful season in virtue of Christ’s name, and of his hard wounds, which name and wounds thou hast so customarily and horribly despised all

“thy life, in idle swearing.”—Ibid. In his treatise on prelates, (C.C.C. Cambridge, MS.) the reformer has numbered among the sins of this class of men, that they were wont to swear, and in the presence of others, by “the heart, and bones, and nails, and other members of Christ.” From the record of William Thorp’s examination before archbishop Arundel, it appears, that the official language of primates was not unfrequently interlarded with such asseverations.—Fox, i. 689.

CHAP. " That he is all-good — Why? — Because he
 III. " maketh all things turn to the profit of good men,
 " who faithfully love him. That he is all-just—
 " Why?—Because he rewardeth all good deeds,
 " and punishes all trespasses in due time, and in
 " due measure, both secret and open; neither
 " may any creature resist his punishing, whether
 " in earth, in purgatory, or in hell. That he is
 " all-merciful—Why?—Because he is readier to
 " receive sinful men to grace, that would truly
 " leave their sins, than they are to ask mercy." His reader is then admonished, that the sabbath is not so much commemorative of the work of creation, as of the resurrection of Christ, and of the gift of the Spirit; and it is then added, " be-
 " think thee heartily of the wonderful kindness
 " of God, who was so high and so worshipful in
 " Heaven, that he should come down so low,
 " and be born of the maiden, and become our
 " brother, to buy us again, by his hard passion,
 " from our thralldom to Satan. He was beaten,
 " and buffeted, and scourged, so that there was
 " not left a whole spot of his skin, but all his
 " body was as one stream of blood. He was
 " crowned with a crown of thorns for despite;
 " and when the crown, as some writers say,
 " would not set fast down to his head, for the long
 " thorns, they took staves and beat them down,
 " until the thorns pierced the place of the brain.
 " He was then nailed, hand and foot, with sharp
 " nails and rugged, that his pain might be the
 " more, and so at last he suffered a painful death,
 " hanging full shamefully on the hard tree! And

“ all this he did and suffered of his own kindness,
“ without any sin of himself, that he might de-
“ liver us from sin and pain, and bring us to
“ everlasting bliss. Thou shouldst also think
“ constantly, how, when he had made thee of
“ nought, thou hadst forsaken him, and all his
“ kindness, through sin, and hadst taken thee to
“ Satan and his service, world without end, had
“ not Christ, God and man, suffered this hard
“ death to save us. And thus see the great kind-
“ ness, and all other goodness, which God hath
“ shewn for thee; and thereby learn thy own
“ great unkindness; and thus, thou shalt see,
“ that man is the most fallen of creatures, and
“ the unkindest of all the creatures that ever
“ God made! It should be full sweet and de-
“ lightful to us to think thus on this great kind-
“ ness, and this great love of Jesus Christ!”

It is under the influence of such reflections, that Wycliffe calls on men to become active “ on the
“ sabbath about the soul, as on other days about
“ the body;” requiring of each, that he should
“ evermore think on his own sin, and on the
“ shortness and falseness of this wicked world.”

On the next precept, it is observed, that the honour rendered to parents, should be extended to the christian pastor, as a spiritual father, and to the Creator, as “ the best of all,” and as the being for whom men should be prepared to make any sacrifice, or endure “ any death.” The prohibition, “ Thou shalt not kill,” is said to be violated, not only by the deed of blood, but by depriving men of their character, or regarding

CHAP. them with hatred.²⁸ There is much strength of
 III. reasoning, and of reproof, in his comment on these precepts; and the same is observable in his treatment of that relating to the vices of impurity. He states also, that “in many places, neither “priests nor clerks, wedded nor single, may keep “themselves” from such offences. To aid men in resisting temptations of this nature, many things are suggested. The tempted are reminded particularly, that the passion of Christ is designed to save them from sin, and “that God is “every where present, and seeth most clearly “all things, and is more willing to help those “who are in trouble, and truly seek after his “help, than they are ready to desire it, be they “never so fervent; and that God, of his condescension and truth, will not suffer man to be “tempted more than he may bear, and with “God’s grace overcome.”

Some extracts might with propriety be made from the comment on the remaining precepts, but the observations at the close of the treatise are too characteristic to be omitted. “Therefore “covet not thy neighbour’s goods, despise him “not, slander him not, deceive him not, scorn

²⁸ It is thus that he assails the frequent crime of manslaughter. “How shall he be hardy to stand before God, who has slain a son of God? “It is a wonder how any man dare “destroy the creature whom God hath “made in his own likeness. If a “craftsman has so great a love for his “work that he may not suffer it to be “lost, how much, guess you, that God “loveth the creature he hath made in

“his own likeness?”—Ibid. The deed is farther interpreted as a despising and scorning of the passion and painful death of Jesus Christ, who died to save men’s lives “unto the bliss of “heaven.”—Ibid. It was the worth of human nature, as arising from these facts, which rendered Wycliffe so much the foe of war, and so much devoted to the religious welfare of men.

“ him not, belie him not, backbite him not—the
 “ which is a common custom now-a-days—and
 “ so in all other things do no otherwise than
 “ thou wouldst reasonably that he did to thee.
 “ But many think if they give a penny to a par-
 “ doner, they shall be forgiven the breaking of
 “ all the commandments of God, and, therefore,
 “ they take no heed how they keep them. But,
 “ I say thee, for certain, though thou have priests
 “ and friars to sing for thee, and though thou
 “ each day hear many masses, and found chaun-
 “ tries and colleges, and go on pilgrimages all thy
 “ life, and give all thy goods to pardoners; all this
 “ shall not bring thy soul to heaven. While if the
 “ commandments of God are revered to the end,
 “ though neither penny nor halfpenny be pos-
 “ sessed, there shall be everlasting pardon, and
 “ the bliss of heaven!” The reader is, in conclu-
 sion, admonished, that to suffer for Christ can be
 no hard requirement, since he has so greatly
 suffered for us; and an appeal is made to the
 scenes through which apostles, and confessors,
 and martyrs, have passed to their present exalta-
 tion, as an inducement to bear the evils of time
 with resignation, and to count them no small
 honour, if endured in the cause of the gospel.

From these extracts, a correct judgment may
 be formed of Wycliffe's opinions in theology, at
 the period of commencing his divinity lectures
 among the students of Oxford. The doctrines
 which have been in general regarded as forming
 the distinguishing truths of the christian reve-
 lation, were evidently the favourite portion of his

CHAP. III. creed. Thus we find him zealously inculcating
— the lessons of inspiration on the fall of man, and the consequent depravity of human nature; on the excellence and perpetual obligation of the moral law; on the exclusive dependence of every child of Adam, for the remission of his sins, on the atonement of Christ; and for victory over temptation, and the possession of holiness, on the aids of divine grace. It has appeared also, that these momentous tenets were very far from being regarded with the coldness of mere speculation. On the contrary, in the experience of Wycliffe, they are found united with those feelings of gratitude and humility, with that lowly and hallowed confidence in God, and with those refined pleasures of devotion, which they so directly tend to produce. With him, to use his own nervous language, the love of God was an exercise of soul, "full of reason." If his lectures from the professor's chair were somewhat less devotional, or less marked by practical detail, than the treatise which we have now examined, it will be but just to assume, that his statements on such occasions were in perfect consistency with the doctrine avowed in his more popular compositions. It should be remarked also, that the doctrine announced by Wycliffe, with respect to the divine favour, as certainly pertaining, and as alone pertaining, to the worshipper whose reliance on the grace of the Redeemer had produced the love of God and of his commandments, was one of no small importance. It will appear, indeed, in the course of this narrative, that the independence of

every priestly mystery, which was thus main-
tained, was to prove the essential, and the most
efficient means of our religious emancipation.²⁹

²⁹ I avail myself of this space to remind the reader, that the term "law" and the phrase "the law of God," frequently occurring in the theological productions of the fourteenth century, and especially in those of Wycliffe,

are often to be understood as referring, not merely to the preceptive portions of the Scriptures, but to the whole sum of divine revelation. Such was the manner of the Old Testament writers.

CHAP.
III.

CHAPTER IV.

STATE OF THE PAPAL INFLUENCE IN ENGLAND ON THE ACCESSION OF EDWARD THE THIRD.—COMPLAINTS RESPECTING IT.—STATUTE AGAINST PROVIDORS, AND THAT OF PREMUNIRE.—EMBASSY TO THE PAPAL COURT.—FAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS PERIOD IMPROVED BY WYCLIFFE.—INQUIRY CONCERNING THE NUMBER OF ALIEN BENEFICES IN ENGLAND.—A SECOND EMBASSY TO THE PAPAL COURT, INCLUDING THE NAME OF WYCLIFFE.—BRUGES, THE SEAT OF NEGOTIATION.—NOTICE OF THAT CITY.—WYCLIFFE WITH THE DUKE OF LANCASTER AT BRUGES.—RESULT OF HIS EMBASSY.—ITS PROBABLE INFLUENCE ON HIS SENTIMENTS.—HE IS PROMOTED BY THE KING TO THE PREBEND OF AUST, AND TO THE RECTORY OF LUTTERWORTH.—PROCEEDINGS OF THE GOOD PARLIAMENT.—THE REFORMER IS ACCUSED OF TEACHING DANGEROUS OPINIONS.—HIS APPEARANCE BEFORE THE BISHOP OF LONDON.—DEATH OF EDWARD THE THIRD.—MEASURES OF RICHARD'S FIRST PARLIAMENT.—ITS APPEAL TO THE JUDGMENT OF WYCLIFFE.—HIS REPLY.

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Papal influence in England, on the accession of Edward the third.

IN the introductory portion of this work, we have noticed the frequent disputes between the successors of our first William, and the Roman prelates. The object of this struggle was to determine the limits of the monarchical and pontifical power with respect to the persons and property of the English clergy, and even of the English people.¹ That feudal homage which had been spurned by the pride of the Conqueror, we have seen extorted, after an interval of nearly two centuries, from the weakness of John; and we have marked

¹ C. iii. sect. i.

the avaricious application of the political and religious usurpation which was thus brought to its climax. From that period the pontiff's frequently assert their will to be above all law, whether affecting the church or the state; and in their various exactions, they appear to have been rarely impeded by any restraints arising from the sentiments of justice or pity. Hence, while our monarchs were readily absolved from their vows, with respect to Magna Charta, the emoluments of the English hierarchy were conferred with a shameless profusion on the creatures of the papal court. Against this system of tyranny and depredation, some loud remonstrances were offered; but promises of amendment were no sooner made than forgotten; and on the accession of Edward the third, the nation, if less exposed to the ambition of the popes than in some preceding reigns, was not less impoverished by those devices which were meant to replenish the papal treasury.

It was in the sixteenth year of Edward the third, that the recently elected pontiff, Clement the sixth, declared the two next vacancies in the Anglican church, amounting to the annual value of two thousand marks, to be, by provision, the property of two among his cardinals. The moment was unfavourable to such a demand, and the language of complaint which had been uttered by the nobles and the commons under preceding sovereigns was now repeated, and was enforced by the sincere concurrence of the monarch. Edward, in his letter to the pope, distinctly states that the custom of provisors had transferred the

CHAP.
IV.
Occasions
loud com-
plaint.
1343.

CHAP. property designed for the support of religion, to
 IV. ——— the hands of men who neither dwelt in the
 country nor understood its language, and who
 were alike unable and unwilling to discharge
 the duties of their office; and adding, that the
 jurisdiction of his courts had been in various
 particulars impaired by this practice, it is de-
 scribed as at variance alike with the royal pre-
 rogative, the right of the chapters, and that of
 patrons in general. The evils thus stated are
 also declared to be insufferable; and viewed as
 the natural consequence of the novel practice of
 providing for benefices before they were vacant,
 it is required that the custom of provisors be
 instantly abolished. In support of this claim, it
 is remarked, that the commission of the popes, as
 derived from St. Peter, is evidently to befriend
 the church, and not to oppress it; to feed, and
 not to impoverish, the flock of Christ.²

But the redress of these grievances, though
 thus firmly demanded, was demanded in vain.

Statutes of
 provisors
 and premu-
 nire.

Hence, it devolved on the king and the parlia-
 ment, in the year 1350, to attempt the protection
 of the country from this system of relentless fraud,
 by the celebrated statute against “provisors,”
 and three years later by another enactment,
 equally known by the name “premunire.” The
 first declared the collation to any dignity or
 benefice, in a manner opposed to the rights of
 the king, the chapters, or its patrons, to be void—
 subjecting the parties concerned in every such

1350.

² Wals. 161. Collier, i. 546, 547, 554.

offence, to fine and imprisonment, and prohibiting appeal, beyond the court of the sovereign. The second statute was directed against the growing custom of transferring questions in relation to property, from the decision of the English courts to the re-judgment of the pontiffs—exposing all such offenders in future, to heavy fines, and to imprisonment at the king's will.³ The rigorous enforcement of the latter provision was highly beneficial; but, from many subsequent facts, it is evident that the former imposed but a feeble check on the evils which it was intended to remove.

In 1373 the English parliament is still complaining of the evils arising from papal provisions, and they are even said to be more oppressive than at any former period. To save the property of the realm, and to silence the continued murmurs of his subjects, Edward commissioned Gilbert, bishop of Bangor, Bolton, a monk of Dunholm, and William de Burton and John de Shepey, to state to the pope the discontent which his conduct had excited through the nation. Gregory the eleventh, who then filled the papal chair, resided at Avignon, and to him it was delivered as the claim of Edward and of the English people, “that the pontiff should desist from the reservation of benefices in the Anglican church; that the clergy should henceforth freely enjoy their election to episcopal dignities; and that it might be sufficient, in the case of electing

Embassy
to the papal
court.

³ 25, 27, Edw. III.

CHAP. IV. "a bishop, that his appointment should be confirmed by his metropolitan, as was the ancient custom."⁴ To this remonstrance, some partial concessions were made; but they were so far defective, or made with so little appearance of sincerity, that in the parliament of the same year a petition was presented, which implored that some remedy should be devised against the provisors of the popes, and against other novel customs, which had drained the land of its wealth to an extent that could be no longer endured. An act was accordingly passed, with a view to protect the community from these rapacious encroachments of the head of the church; and one which, by declaring the election of bishops to be completely independent of the papal sanction, became a law, affecting the spiritual as well as the temporal supremacy assumed by the pontiffs.⁵

Circumstances favourable to ecclesiastical reform.

The partialities of the Avignon popes, and of their conclaves, to the interest of France, were too well known at this period, not to have a considerable influence on the popular feeling in England. Under any circumstances, the most general notion of equity, or the mere selfishness of human nature, would have been sufficient to render the practices adverted to a matter of serious regret. But to view the kingdom as subject to this exhausting process, and chiefly that her wealth might be transferred to aid the resources of her most powerful adversary, was inseparable from indignant feeling and bitter complaint. It

⁴ Barnes's Edward III. 864. Lewis, c. iii.

⁵ Cotton's Abridgment, 119. Barnes, 864.

was at this crisis of the popular feeling that the labours of Wycliffe would become particularly efficient. His zeal and learning were applied to demonstrate, that the authority assumed by the pontiffs, and by many of the national clergy, with respect to the affairs of states, and ecclesiastical property, was in most instances usurpation, and a wide departure from the maxims which had been revered by the christian priesthood in the better ages of the church. He, at the same time, laboured to show, that the effort of the commons to reform spiritual grievances, was neither novel nor obtrusive, but a legitimate exercise of power. It is also observable, that in the various complaints preferred by that body, with respect to such matters, nothing can be less apparent than a feeling of suspicion as to the propriety of entering upon the ground which they had taken. On the contrary, the popes are plainly regarded as the centre of a body of men, who, under the garb of a sanctified vocation, were living to the indulgence of every worldly passion. So inveterate, too, was this disease considered, that all hope of recovery, as arising from the proper source, appears to have been relinquished. But what the priest refused to attempt, the magistrate was determined to accomplish.

It was this state of popular excitement which suggested the importance of instant inquiry as to the exact number and value of the alien benefices in the church of England.⁶ Possessed

CHAP.
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Improved
by Wycliffe.

Inquiries
concerning
the number
of alien
benefices.

1374.

⁶ Fox. Acts and Monuments, i. 561, 562, where the reader may perceive something of the pastoral solicitude

which guided the Avignon popes in the disposal of English benefices.

CHAP. of the certain information which this investigation
 IV. had supplied, it was resolved by the parliament of 1374, to choose certain delegates, who should once more convey their remonstrance to the pontiff.

A second embassy to the pope, including the name of Wycliffe.

The first name in the list of persons so appointed, is that of a prelate who had been employed on the previous commission; the second, is that of our reformer.⁷ It will presently appear, that in the opening of 1377, Wycliffe stood before the English prelates accused of publishing opinions which shook every secular pretension of the hierarchy; and which were no less hostile to that theory of spiritual power, from which the worldly influence of the clergy had been mainly derived. These opinions, however, which he is then accused of having for some time promulgated, must have been published before the close of 1374, as the subsequent interval was passed upon the continent. It follows, therefore, that to the parliament which thus required his appearance as an advocate in behalf of the king and the people, his novelties of opinion could hardly have been unknown. But the negotiation with which our reformer's name became thus associated, was not to be conducted at the papal residence. And from what is known of Rome during the middle ages, it was certainly politic to prevent enlightened men from too nearly observing the manners which generally prevailed among the nearest dependants on the successors of St. Peter.⁸ Wycliffe

⁷ See Appendix, No. X.

⁸ Grossteste carried some of his complaints to the court of the pontiff,

but returned to England in a somewhat gloomy mood.— Paris, 802. “Tired with the mal-administration

could hardly have doubted that the corruptions which he so much deplored in the members of the church, were to be traced in no small measure to its head. But hitherto he had seen much more of the streams than of the fountain; and for this reason, we may almost regret that the meeting of the delegates was arranged to take place at Bruges, and not at Avignon.

The former city, however, was one of vast extent, and possessed considerable interest. Its name had been derived from a bridge connected with it; its foundation is attributed to the year 760; and its fortifications rose somewhat more than a century later. When commerce had extended her numerous towns over the provinces of Germany and Flanders, the wealth which was thus acquired, became an allurements too great to be always withstood by the undisciplined passions of the powerful. The prelates, on whom the government of various cities devolved, with the title of imperial vicars, were generally unpopular; and the local nobility—who appear to have been as much disposed to illegal exaction and private rapine, as to political feuds and the sports of the field—were not less the objects of suspicion. Many real dangers were no doubt felt as arising from piracy and invasion. But we can easily conceive, that such evils would be shrewdly magnified by these maritime republics, so as to give the most plausible appearance to the industry with

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IV.

Notice of
Bruges at
this period.

“ and mercenariness of the Roman
“ see, he left Rome and returned into
“ England, and being dissatisfied with
“ the state of the English church, at

“ his arrival, he designed to quit his
“ bishopric, and to retire for study
“ and devotion.”—Collier, i. 458.

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IV.

Its con-
nexion with
the Hanse-
atic league.

which they laboured to protect their dwellings and their property from the probable approach of an enemy. It was certainly to protect the wealth and independence which had been the reward of their ingenuity and toil, that these commercial fraternities mingled in one friendly alliance, constituting the famous Hanseatic league. This body, sometimes soliciting the secret, and sometimes the open protection of the sovereign, maintained its stand through several centuries, not only against the most formidable combinations of pirates, but against the lawless pride of many a local aristocracy, and often against the spiritual weapons of the church. The formation of this memorable union is dated from the middle of the thirteenth century. Its existence may, perhaps, be traced to an earlier period; but it then assumed a definite form, admitting such towns only to its securities, as were in possession of their own keys, and free in the exercise of their civil jurisdiction. By this league, which in 1370 included more than sixty cities, an enviable distinction was conferred on Bruges. From arrangements made in 1262, that city soon became the emporium of Europe; uniting, as the consequence of its locality, and from the imperfect state of navigation, the growing traffic of the Baltic, and the ancient commerce of the Mediterranean and the east. In an assembly of 1361, six hundred of the Bruges ladies are said to have excelled the queen of France in the costliness of their attire, and to the avowed mortification of royal vanity. With this taste for splendour, the spirit of civil freedom,

which every where rose with that of commercial enterprise, was so far connected as to impart to the manners of the Bruges citizens a self-confidence and fearlessness which passed with the more patient victims of feudal tyranny for presumption and insolence.⁹

There was much in such a state of society to interest the mind of Wycliffe. Those luxurious habits, indeed, and that love of finery which had long characterized the population before him, could not have been regarded with pleasure by a mind of his severe complexion. But the steady resistance presented by the citizens of Bruges to every oppressive exaction, whether proceeding from their civil or their ecclesiastical rulers, must have excited his admiration. From the same feeling, as in progress among his countrymen, his present commission had arisen; and that he returned increasingly zealous to strengthen and mature it, is no matter of conjecture.

It should be noticed also, that during his stay in that city, it became the seat of negotiation between the ambassadors of France and England, under the mediation of the archbishop of Ravenna, and the bishop of Carpentras, as the representatives of the pope. The dukes of Anjou and Burgundy, brothers of the sovereign, were delegates on the part of France; and the claims of England were entrusted to the earl of Salisbury, Sudbury, (then bishop of London,) and the duke of Lancaster.¹⁰ The character in which Wycliffe appeared at

Wycliffe
and the
duke of
Lancaster at
Bruges.

⁹ Anderson's History of Commerce, i. 57, 85, 225, 253, 268.

¹⁰ Rymer, vii. 49 Edw. III. Feb. 20. Jan. 27.

CHAP. Bruges, would secure him access to these ambas-
 IV. ———— sadors from the most formidable powers of the
 age, and would lead to a more intimate knowledge
 of the intrigues which have been too commonly
 admitted into the policy of states, and of the
 church. Such lessons might not be pleasing, but
 to acquire them was important.

Result of
 the embassy.

Our information respecting the progress of the
 negotiation which chiefly claimed the attention
 of Wycliffe is imperfect. It is certain that he
 arrived at Bruges near the month of August, in
 1374; and under the date of September, 1375, we
 find six bulls addressed to the English monarch by
 the pontiff, and treating of questions then at issue
 between this nation and the papacy.¹¹ In these
 documents it was provided, that no person at
 present in possession of a benefice in England,
 should be disturbed by any interference of the
 pope's authority; that the reservation of bene-
 fices which had been declared by Urban the fifth,
 and were not yet acted upon, should be annulled;
 that the titles of certain clergymen which had
 been questioned by the late pope, should be con-
 firmed, remitting also the demand of their first
 fruits; and that an assessment of the revenues of
 certain cardinals, holding livings in England,
 should be made, to effect a repair of their churches,
 and other ecclesiastical buildings, which had fallen
 into decay—the extent of such assessment to be
 determined by the verdict of a jury convened
 in the neighbourhood. To protract the contro-
 versy which tended toward an unfavourable result,

¹¹ Rymer, vii. 49 Edw. III. Sept. 1.

was a conspicuous maxim in the policy of the court of Rome, and one that proved of much importance to its cause. It not unfrequently happened, that a short interval placed the appellants in circumstances widely altered; so that a decision which it would have been unwise to have avowed at once, was often announced without danger at a later period. In such cases the pontiffs commonly attributed their delay to the serious difficulties of the questions before them; and when obliged to make some communications respecting them, it was frequently merely to gain time or to ascertain the effect of evasion. Thus, in the letters addressed to Edward the third, after a delay of more than twelve months, there was no surrender of pontifical claims. The reservation of benefices; the demand of first fruits, from such as became vacant; and some other obnoxious customs, were relinquished so far only as they stood connected with the authority of Urban. The silence of his successor with respect to such points, as they might become involved in his own conduct, discovers plainly, that every *principle* in the system of usurpation so loudly censured, was still regarded as unalienable. That such were the views entertained of the papal letters in England, may be inferred from the continuance of the embassy which produced them. From a reply of Edward to a petition of the parliament convened in the April of the following year, it appears that the royal commissioners were still prosecuting their instructions in behalf of the English church.¹² But

¹² Cotton's Abridgment, Ann.

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the aged monarch was rapidly declining ; his continental influence was almost annihilated ; and faction had made considerable inroads on the domestic policy of his kingdom. Aided by these circumstances, Gregory the eleventh contrived to retain his authority unimpaired, consenting only to a partial restriction of it, and to that restriction upon such conditions only as might soon be made to furnish a pretext for resuming whatever he had appeared to surrender. It was agreed, that for the future the pope should desist from the reservation of benefices ; but it was also required, that the king should no more confer them by his writ, "*quare impedit.*" This concession, which regards the authority of the pontiffs, in relation to the offices and emoluments of the Anglican church, as at least the equal of what pertained to the sovereign, is the amount of the redress obtained by a negotiation of two years' continuance. The official confirmation of episcopal and abbatical elections, which had been assumed by the popes, was among the matters of complaint on the part of the English commissioners ; but it was a custom which involved too much to gratify both the avarice and the ambition of the pontiffs not to be obstinately retained. Gilbert, on whom the conducting of this embassy principally devolved, was translated immediately after his return to the see of Hereford ; and, in 1389, to that of St. David's ; and as his advancement, in both instances, was the fruit of papal provisions, it is obvious that in his case, at least, the objects of this embassy had been committed to improper hands.

Wycliffe, who probably regarded the extent of the claims which he was called to advocate, as including but a part of what might, with equal justice, have been preferred, was more than disgusted by this result of the protracted negotiation. Such, also, was the developement of papal sanctity, which had arisen out of his discussions with the envoys of the pontiff, that his rebukes, which hitherto had been directed toward the head of the church but distantly and by implication, are applied in that quarter, soon after this time, with unsparing severity. The popes he learnt, ere long, to regard as men, whose elevation served but to diffuse more widely the pestilence of an example all-surpassing in its worldliness and avarice. The covetousness and the secular ambition, which had so successfully claimed the reputation of a zeal for piety, were stripped of their disguise; and the stimulus thus imparted to his spirit of inquiry, will be found to give a wider extent, and a more determined character to his efforts as opposed to the abounding corruptions.¹³

The duke of Lancaster embarked at Bourdeaux, for England, on the eighth of July, 1376, and we have no evidence that Wycliffe left Bruges at an earlier period. But, during his absence, the reformer had received the most unequivocal proof, that the respect entertained for his character by his sovereign was in no way diminished. In November, 1375, he was presented by the king to the

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Its influence on the sentiments of Wycliffe.

His promotions.

¹³ The papal nuncios on this occasion were Benedict, bishop of Pampeluna, Radulf, bishop of Senigaglia, and

Giles Sancho, provost of the church of Valenza.—Barnes's Edward the Third, 886.

CHAP. IV. prebend of Aust, in the collegiate church of Westbury, in the diocese of Worcester. About the same period, the rectory of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, became vacant. Lord Henry de Ferars, the patron, was then a minor; it in consequence devolved upon the crown to appoint the next incumbent, and the royal patronage was again exercised in favour of Wycliffe.¹⁴

Proceedings
of the good
parliament.

The interval, however, which had brought preferment to the reformer, had involved the duke of Lancaster in a political struggle which embittered the remainder of his life. While the career of Edward and his sons was such as to gratify the vanity of the nation, the selfishness of popular feeling was in a good degree manageable. But the scale of prosperity had recently turned in favour of the enemy. The measures of government, as the usual consequence, began to be less acceptable; and the duke of Lancaster, on whom, from the age of the king, and the sickness of the heir-apparent, the cares of the administration chiefly devolved, found himself exposed to much of the growing petulance and prejudice. The prince of Wales may have had some real objection

¹⁴ The following entry, though relating to Wycliffe's successor in the rectory of Lutterworth, determines the source of his promotion, and the day of his death. "Johan. de Morhouse, presbyter per Dominum Henr. de Ferrariis de Groby ad Eccle. de Lutterworth. Inquisitores dicunt, quod dicta Ecclesia incepit vacare ultimo dei Decem. ultimo præteriti (1384) per mortem Joannis Wycliff ultimi rectoris ejusdem. Item,

"dicunt, quod Dominus Henricus de Ferrariis de Groby est verus patronus, et quod dominus noster Edwardus tertius Rex, ratione minoris ætatis dicti Domini Henrici de Ferrariis dictum Dominum Johannem Wycliff ultimo presentavit ad eadem. Dictus Johannes Morhouse admissus est."—8 Kal. Febru. 1384. Reg. Bokyngham, c. cnl. Ep. Kennet. MS. Lewis, c. iii. p. 44.

to the official conduct of his brother ; it is certain, that at this crisis, the name of the heir-apparent was connected with measures which were designed to render John of Gaunt the object of disaffection among the people.¹⁵ But the history of the parliament which thus distinguished itself, is involved in no little obscurity. Courtney, bishop of London, and Wykeham of Winchester, with others among its leading members, were men whose feelings are known to have been at the farthest remove from the spirit of democracy. At the same time, the attack conducted by the house of commons, during this session, on various branches of official corruption, is one of the most determined efforts in the cause of religion, and of general freedom, to be found in our parliamentary annals. To account for the agreement of parties so opposite, in the decisive measures adopted, it has been supposed, that the prelates above named, and their adherents, descended to employ the popular influence, as their best protection in supplanting the existing administration ; and that while it was known that some severe complaints, with respect to the corruptions of the church, must in consequence be allowed to reach the presence of the king, it was secretly arranged that they should there be rendered ineffectual.¹⁶ This view of the event, though not without its difficulties, removes the greater number of the perplexities connected with it. In its proceedings, the charges preferred

¹⁵ Yet the name of Lancaster is inserted in terms of affection in the list of his eldest brother's exe-

cutors.—Testamenta Vestusta. ubi supra.

¹⁶ Godwin's Life of Chaucer, c. xxix.

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during this session against the servants of the crown, were followed in several instances by confiscation and imprisonment. Among the principal sufferers were lord Latimer, the known friend of the duke of Lancaster; and Alice Perers, a female who, after the death of Philippa, is said to have acquired an improper influence over the king, and to have added to the usual intrigues of a court, the effrontery, in some instances, of publicly impeding the course of justice. The expulsion of Latimer, from the royal council, is said to be for ever; and the punishment of Alice Perers, who was no doubt greatly calumniated, appears to have consisted in forfeiture, and a prohibition from approaching the person of the sovereign.¹⁷ It is enough, however, to know the relation in which Latimer stood to John of Gaunt; and that Edward retained the obnoxious female near him to the closing moments of his life; to be assured that the leaders in the parliament of 1376, were men whose conduct was scarcely more agreeable to the monarch than to his second son. But imperfect as our notices are respecting the secret history of that convention, it has been justly remarked, that the policy adopted “in employing “the house of commons as an engine of attack

¹⁷ Walsingham appears to have recorded every malicious rumour he could learn respecting this woman. Sir Robert Cotton, however, remarks, that “the record against the said “dame being very long, proveth no “such heinous matter against her, “and these two suits wherefore she “was condemned, seemed very honest;

“but mishap, she was friendly to “many, but all were not so to her,” (1 Ric. 2). Her subsequent marriage to lord Windsor, lieutenant of Ireland, and one of the most distinguished noblemen of the age, warrants the inference that she had been bitterly maligned.—Godwin’s Chaucer, ii. 231.

“ against an obnoxious ministry, was perfectly
 “ novel, and indicates a sensible change in the
 “ character of our constitution. In the reign of
 “ Edward the second, parliament had little share
 “ in resisting the government: much more was
 “ effected by the barons, through the risings of their
 “ feudal tenantry. Fifty years of authority better
 “ respected, of law better enforced, had rendered
 “ these more perilous, and of a more violent appear-
 “ ance, than formerly. A surer resource presented
 “ itself in the increased weight of the lower house
 “ in parliament; and this indirect aristocratical
 “ influence gave a surprising impulse to that as-
 “ sembly; and particularly tended to establish,
 “ beyond question, its controul over public
 “ abuses.”¹⁸

And while the energy of the lower house was thus effectively employed with respect to the existing ministry, and supplied so important a precedent in our parliamentary history, its exposures of ecclesiastical disorders are made with the same unsparing hand, exhibiting them as descending, evidently, from the head of the hierarchy to the lowest of its members. The event, however, soon discovered, that the latter class of evils were less within the power of correction possessed by an English house of commons than the former. But the tone of remonstrance adopted on these points, by the representatives of the English people, in 1376, is worthy of notice. We may safely conclude, that they were mistaken in affirming, that the kingdom had recently lost two-thirds of its

¹⁸ Hallam, iii. 85.

CHAP. population and its wealth; but the disasters,
IV. whether of war abroad or of poverty and disease at home, which were believed to have occasioned these alarming privations, are chiefly imputed to the mal-practices of popes and cardinals. In the substance of their petition, as given by Sir Robert Cotton, they state, that the taxes paid to the court of Rome for ecclesiastical dignities, amounted to five times more than those obtained by the king from the whole produce of the realm. "For some "one bishopric, or other dignity," the pope is said to receive, "by way of translation and death, "three, four, or five, several taxes; and while "for money the brokers of that sinful city (Rome) "promote many caitiffs, being altogether un- "learned and unworthy, to a thousand marks' "living yearly, the learned and worthy can hardly "obtain twenty marks, whereby learning decay- "eth;—aliens," they proceed, "and enemies to "this land, who never saw, nor care to see, their "parishioners have those livings; whereby they "despise God's service, and convey away the "treasure of the realm, and are worse than Jews "or Saracens." Against these customs, they plead "the law of the church," which requires that all such preferments should be granted in charity, "without praying or paying." They also affirm it to be the demand of reason, that establishments which were the fruit of devotion, should be kept subservient to the cause of hospitality; and they fear not to add, that "God has "given his sheep to the pope to be pastured, and "not shorn or shaven; and that lay patrons, per-

“ceiving the simony and covetousness of the pope, CHAP.
 “do thereby learn to sell their benefices to mere IV.
 “brutes, no otherwise than Christ was sold to
 “the Jews.” By such means the pontiff is said
 to derive a revenue from England alone, exceed-
 ing that of any prince in christendom. It is
 therefore stated, “that the pope’s collector, and
 “other strangers, the king’s enemies, and only
 “lieger spies for English dignities, and disclosing
 “the secrets of the realm, ought to be discharged.”
 It is also added, “That the same collector, being
 “also receiver of the pope’s pence, keepeth a
 “house in London, with clerks and officers there-
 “unto belonging, as if it were one of the king’s
 “solemn courts, transporting yearly to the pope,
 “twenty thousand marks, and most commonly
 “more: that cardinals and other aliens, remaining
 “at the court of Rome,—whereof one cardinal is a
 “dean of York; another of Salisbury; another
 “of Lincoln; another archdeacon of Canterbury;
 “another archdeacon of Durham; another arch-
 “deacon of Suffolk; and another archdeacon of
 “York; another prebendary of Thane and Nas-
 “singdon; another prebendary of York, in the
 “diocese of York,—have divers other, the best
 “dignities in England, and have sent over yearly
 “unto them, twenty thousand marks, over and
 “above that which English brokers lying here
 “have: that the pope, to ransom Frenchmen, the
 “king’s enemies, who defend Lombardy for him,
 “doth always, at his pleasure, levy a subsidy of the
 “whole clergy of England; that the pope, for
 “mere gain, maketh sundry translations of all the

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“ bishoprics and other dignities within the realm ;
 “ and that the pope’s collector hath this year
 “ taken to his use the first fruits of all benefices ;
 “ that it would be good, therefore, to renew all
 “ the statutes against provisions from Rome, since
 “ the pope reserveth all the benefices of the world
 “ for his own proper gift, and hath within this
 “ year created twelve new cardinals—so that now
 “ there are thirty, whereas there were wont to be
 “ but twelve in all ; and all the said thirty cardi-
 “ nals, except two or three, are the king’s ene-
 “ mies.” From these facts it is argued, that the
 pontiffs, if unchecked, may, ere long, confer the
 secular dignities, and the estates of the realm, on
 their own creatures, after the manner in which
 they had “ accroached” to themselves the elec-
 tion of heads to “ all houses and corporations of
 “ religion.” To protect the country from prac-
 tices, which threatened to render its present em-
 barrassments perpetual, and by depriving the
 native clergy of nearly every stimulus to improve-
 ment, to reduce it to barbarism, it was required
 that the provisors of the popes should be strenu-
 ously resisted, and that no papal “ collector or
 “ proctor should remain in England, upon pain of
 “ life and limb ; and that no Englishman, on the
 “ like pain, should become such collector or proc-
 “ tor, or remain at the court of Rome.”¹⁹

Such were the proceedings of an assembly on
 which the admiration of the people conferred
 the name of the good parliament. The only per-
 plexing circumstance respecting it is, that its

¹⁹ Cotton’s Abridgment, 128. Fox. Acts and Monuments, i. 561.

measures should have involved so much hostility CHAP.
IV. with regard to the duke of Lancaster. Nor is it easy to suppose, that men so zealous in the cause of ecclesiastical reformation, would have been induced to sacrifice so efficient a partisan, had they not been led to anticipate the most active succour from their new allies, who were known to be his opponents. If such, however, was their expectation, they were painfully deceived; and the duke's adherence to their object, notwithstanding the wound thus received from the hand of its friends, may be regarded as no mean evidence of his political sincerity.

We have noticed, that John of Gaunt em-^{1376.} barked for England early in July. Before his landing, the parliament, which had excluded him from a place in the government, and among its last acts had withdrawn his power as ambassador, was dissolved.²⁰ The prince of Wales, also, the ornament of chivalry, had breathed his last on a bed of sickness. The king, it appears, was far from being satisfied with the committee which had been recently appointed to act as his advisers; and declaring the duke of Lancaster—now his eldest son—his principal associate in the government, the parties who had been prosecuted by the late house of commons were presently recalled. In the subsequent punishment, also, of Peter de la Mare, of the earl of March, and of the bishop of Winchester, who were all active members of the good parliament, we learn the sentiments of the court as to the authors of

²⁰ Rymer, vii. 50 Edw. III. June 12.

CHAP. the obnoxious measures which had obtained the
 IV. ———. sanction of that assembly.

About six months intervened between the dissolution of that parliament, and the meeting of another, more devoted to the politics or the power of John of Gaunt. During this interval, some murmurings arose among the people, in consequence of the imprisonment of de la Mare; and the bishops, we may conclude, were not less displeased by the sentence of confiscation which had been passed on the episcopal temporalities of their brother of Winchester. It is observable, that at this moment the doctrine of Wycliffe is first adverted to by the English clergy, as calling for official interference. It was no secret, that to attack the rector of Lutterworth, was an indirect method of assailing his patron, who now presided in the councils of the sovereign. Courtney, one of the most imperious churchmen of the age, had been recently elevated to the see of London, and had fully committed himself against the duke of Lancaster, by his conduct in the parliament of the preceding year. The zeal of this prelate was now employed to rouse and concentrate the indignation of his order against the opinions and conduct of Wycliffe. In the next convocation,—which took place on the third of February, a week subsequent to the opening of the new parliament,²¹—we find the reformer cited to appear before his ecclesiastical superiors, to answer on certain charges, having respect to him, as holding and publishing many erroneous and

Wycliffe is
 accused of
 holding
 erroneous
 opinions.
 1377.

²¹ Parker, ubi supra.

heretical doctrines. The nineteenth day of the same month was fixed for hearing his defence; and St. Paul's is described as crowded with the populace. In explanation of this circumstance, it should be noticed, that the minority in the present house of commons, had sought to strengthen their influence by an alliance with the prelates, and with the citizens of London; and had induced many of the latter to believe, that the duke intended an abridgment of their liberties. Of the people assembled in St. Paul's, the immediate dependents of the clergy would probably form no inconsiderable number; the rest, influenced, perhaps, by the malicious rumour adverted to, appear to have been ripe for tumult. There is no reason, however, to suppose, that Wycliffe shared at all in the resentment of the citizens. On the contrary, it is evident, that his opinions were not less acceptable to the inhabitants of London, than to the students of Oxford.²² But such was the crowd on this occasion, that the authority of Lord Percy, the earl marshal, and that of the duke himself, were scarcely sufficient to procure the accused an avenue of approach to the place of his judges. Some disturbance, arising from this difficulty, attracted the notice of Courtney, who was about to conduct the prosecution; and we may presume that his displeasure was not at all diminished, on perceiving the two most powerful subjects of the crown prepared to shield the rector of Lutterworth from

CHAP.
IV.

Feb. 19.

His appearance in St. Paul's.

²² Walsingham affirms with indignation, that the Londoners were nearly all Lollards.—Hist. 191. Fuller's Church History, 185. Cont. Murim. 137.

CHAP.
IV.

the meditated vengeance of his enemies. The prelate hastily accosted these noblemen with the language of reproof, proceeding so far as to express his regret that he had not adopted measures to prevent their admission to the court. The duke regarded this haughty intimation as an insult, and warmly replied, that in such matters the authority of the bishop of London would be insufficient to regulate his conduct. Lord Percy felt with his distinguished colleague under this attack, and resented it so far, as to call upon Wycliffe to be seated, observing, that such an indulgence might be necessary, as he would have much to answer. Courtney loudly opposed the advice of the earl marshal, adding, that such conduct in the person accused, must be interpreted as a contempt of the court. The duke, however, applauded the suggestion of his friend; and could we credit the hearsay reports of this scene, we should regard him as descending to the use of language alike ungentlemanly and impolitic. He may have charged the bishop with an assumption of importance, in consequence of family connexion; but it is doubtful, whether it would be done in the style of abuse which has been imputed to him. And we may conclude, that the prudence of John of Gaunt, though no remarkable feature in his character, would be sufficient to prevent his choosing such a moment for declaring his determination to humble the pride, not only of his present antagonist, but of the order of prelacy. We may believe, however, that some angry discussion arose, that, becoming

connected with the already excited feeling of the multitude assembled, a tumult ensued, and that the parties being compelled to separate in disorder, the prosecution was for the present suspended.

CHAP.
IV.

Wycliffe, who had continued the silent spectator of this stormy scene, retired with his friends; but the political animosities to which the commotion may be attributed, were not instantly allayed. The violence discovered in the cathedral was extended to the city. The palace of the Savoy, the most magnificent in the kingdom, was assailed by a band of rioters, and the arms of the duke, its owner, reversed as those of a traitor. The property of Lord Percy suffered less; but a clergyman, mistaken for the earl marshal, was slaughtered by the mob. In these proceedings, the mayor and aldermen appear to have been in some degree implicated. They are said to have been removed by the influence of the duke, that their places might be supplied by persons who were deemed more worthy of confidence.²³

²³ That the first appearance of Wycliffe before the prelates was in 1377, and not in the opening of the year following, as supposed by Mr. Lewis, is certain. The assault on the Savoy palace was, undoubtedly, in immediate connexion with the duke's appearance at St. Paul's along with the reformer, and that event is invariably attributed to the year 1377, and not to 1378. In the former year also, Percy was, as described above, earl marshal; but at the commencement of the latter, he had resigned that office, and had

succeeded to the earlship of Northumberland. In addition to which, there is mention in the account of this transaction, of the days of the week, and these agree with the earlier and not with the later date. The papal bulls, indeed, bear the date of June, 1377, and this circumstance has been allowed to confound the meeting at St. Paul's, which took place some days before these letters were written, with that which they produced about six months afterwards. — Wals. 191, 201 — 201. Spelman, ii. 625.

CHAP. IV. The interval between February and October,

IV.

Accession of
Richard the
second.
June 21.

in 1377, Wycliffe appears to have devoted to the claims of his rectory, and to the duties of his professorship. But that period was one of considerable change in the government of the nation. On the morning of the twenty-first of June, Edward the third expired; and on the afternoon of the following day, Richard, the son of the Black Prince, a youth who had not attained the twelfth year of his age, made his public entry into London. His appearance was in the midst of gorgeous pageantry, which, as the act of the citizens, was more honourable to their feelings in relation to the present, than to their former monarch. The reign of the late king had been unusually extended, and was such as ought to have been reviewed with interest and gratitude. But Edward's latter days were embittered from many sources, and his breath had scarcely departed, when he appears to be wholly forgotten by his subjects. Three weeks were employed in preparing for the coronation of Richard the second, — a splendid ceremony, of which some minute accounts have been preserved.²⁴

July 16.

His first
parliament.
Oct. 13.

About three months later, the new monarch assembled his first parliament. It was a scene of considerable excitement, and was to be followed by more boisterous events. As it included nearly the whole of the members composing the good parliament, it is presumed that the influence of the duke of Lancaster was rapidly declining. But affairs may have taken much of their present

²⁴ Wals. 193—198.

course from his disgust, as readily as from his weakness. By the commons, it was required that a council of twelve peers should be appointed to confer with them, on the business before their house; and that “my lord of Spain”—a title frequently given to John of Gaunt—should be of that number, and act as president. The king sanctioned the proposal: but the duke rose, adverted to the rumours which had been circulated touching his loyalty, and attributing them to certain members of the commons, he remarked that the lower house could have no claim on him for advice. While sensible to his demerit, he could not forget that he was the son of a king, and one of the first subjects of the crown, nor would he agree to connect himself again with the affairs of the nation, until the imputation cast upon him should be wholly removed. His ancestors, of either side, had never numbered a traitor among them, nor was he disposed to be the first to bring a stain upon their memory. But while he felt himself thus strongly bound to sentiments of loyalty, and while it was known that he had more to lose by treason, than any second person in the realm, he challenged his accusers to come forth, pledging himself to meet even the poorest knight in single combat, or in any other form, subject to the sanction of his peers. We may conceive of the ferment created by this appeal. The lords and prelates instantly rose, surrounded the person of the duke, and repeated their assurances, that no living man would credit the calumny referred to. The

CHAP.
IV.

commons appealed to their conduct in inviting the offended party to become their principal adviser, as their best defence; and Lancaster at length consented to bury the past, on condition of obtaining a severe enactment against the authors of any such calumny in the future.²⁵

But the name of our reformer is not less involved in the proceedings of this parliament, than that of his patron. Under a minor prince, the advocates of the prerogative must have felt obliged to regard its extension as hopeless, and its preservation from injury as a work of no ordinary difficulty.²⁶ It is obvious also, that the progress of civil liberty, so materially dependent on the existence of deliberative assemblies, representing the persons and property of a state, has never failed to prove a formidable barrier to the despotism of the church. The character of the first parliament, summoned in the name of Richard of Bourdeaux, and the circumstances under which it was convened, were accordingly such as to lead us to anticipate the repetition of former complaints, with respect to the encroachments of the pontiffs. As a remedy against the evils which had hitherto resisted every influence opposed to them, it was urged that the procuring of a benefice by papal provision, should be punished with outlaw, and that the same penalty should be

²⁵ Rot. Parl. iii.

²⁶ The Archbishop of Canterbury appears to have been fully alive to this danger, and hence in his speech, or rather sermon, at the opening of the first parliament, he was careful to in-

culcate that the monarchy of England was not a matter of election but inheritance. Still, in the ceremony of the coronation, a prominence had been given to the forms of a popular election.—Wals. 193.

incurred by the man who should farm any of the livings in the English church that had been conferred upon foreigners. It was also urged, that the pope should be prevented making “reservations to dignities elective, the same being done against his treaty taken with Edward the third; that all aliens, as well religious as others, do, by candlemas next, avoid the realm; and that during the war, all their lands and goods should be applied thereto.”²⁷ We have seen, that the war adverted to, had long taken a disastrous course. The burdens which it had entailed on the nation were unprecedented, and had created serious complaints. From a document still existing, we learn that it had become a matter of grave discussion, in the present parliament, whether it would not be lawful in a kingdom, in case of necessity, and as the means of defending itself, to detain its treasure, that it might not be conveyed to foreign nations, though the pope himself should demand the same, under pain of his censures, and by virtue of obedience said to be due to him.

CHAP.
IV.

Appeal of
the parliament to the
judgment of
Wycliffe.

The bearings of this question were known to be extensive, and it is said to have been referred to the judgment of Wycliffe in the name of the king. In his reply to this inquiry, the reformer professes to attach but little importance to the opinions of the learned, to the decisions of the canon or of the civil law, or even to the law of England itself—deeming it sufficient to show the affirmative “of this doubt,” from an exclusive

His reply.

²⁷ Cotton's Abridgment, 160—162.

CHAP. appeal to “the principles of the law of Christ.”
 IV. — His first reasonings are designed to prove, that the power of self-preservation, which is so variously, but so certainly, conferred on inanimate bodies, on the brute creation, and on the individuals of the human species, is also conferred on the English nation—a community which ought to be “one body, the clergy and the commonalty “being alike members thereof.” It is thence concluded, “that as there is no power given of God, “to any creature, for any end, which may not “be lawfully used to that end, it follows, that “our kingdom may justly detain its treasure for “the defence of itself, in every case where necessity shall appear to require it.” In farther attempting the solution of this query, he describes every contribution made to the papacy, as being strictly an alms; and alms, it is contended, are properly bestowed on the recipient, only as he is found to be really necessitous,—and can be justly expected from the donor, only as his affluence may be in the same degree certain. The wealth, however, of the papal court was known to be far beyond its legitimate wants, while the embarrassments of England were producing the loudest murmurs. It was by such steps that the reformer endeavoured to conduct his countrymen to the affirmative of this question. To him it appeared, not only as opposed to the doctrine relating to that temporal power which the popes had frequently asserted, but as connecting itself, very intimately, with much that had been claimed by them as a part of their spiritual jurisdiction. It

is thus the document concludes: "Christ, the
 " head of the church, whose example should be
 " followed by all christian priests, lived upon the
 " alms of devout women. He hungered, thirsted,
 " was a stranger, and suffered in many ways,
 " not only in his members, but in himself. As
 " the apostle testifies, he was made poor for your
 " sakes, that ye, through his poverty, might be
 " enriched. Accordingly, when the church was
 " first endowed, whoever among the clergy were
 " then holders of any temporal possessions, held
 " the same in the form of a perpetual alms. This
 " is evident from histories, and from other writ-
 " ings. Hence, St. Bernard, in his second book
 " to the pope Eugenius, declares that no secular
 " dominion could be challenged by him on the
 " ground of his office, as the vicar of St. Peter,
 " and writes thus; 'It may indeed be claimed by
 " you, in virtue of some other plea, but assuredly
 " by no right or title derived from the apostles. For
 " how could an apostle give unto you that which
 " he did not himself possess? That care over the
 " church which he really had, he gave you;
 " but when did he give you any worldly rule or
 " lordship? Observe what he saith, 'Not bearing
 " rule as lords over God's heritage, but yielding
 " yourselves as examples to the flock.' And that
 " ye may not think these words spoken in a show
 " of humility, and not in truth, mark the words of
 " our Lord himself, in the gospel: 'The kings of
 " the nations have lordships over them, but it shall
 " not be so with you.' Here lordly dominion is
 " plainly forbidden to the apostles; and wilt thou

CHAP. “ venture to usurp the same? If a lord, thine
 IV. “ apostleship is lost, if an apostle, thy lordship is
 “ no more, for certainly the one or the other must
 “ be relinquished. If both are sought, both shall
 “ be lost. Or shouldst thou succeed, then judge
 “ thyself to be of that number, respecting whom
 “ God so greatly complains, saying, ‘ They have
 “ reigned, but not through me ; they have become
 “ princes, but I have not known them.’ And if
 “ men will keep that which is forbidden, let us
 “ hear what is said, — ‘ He who is the greatest
 “ among you shall be made as the least, and he
 “ who is the highest shall be your minister ;’ and
 “ to illustrate this saying, he set a child in the
 “ midst of his disciples. This then is the true
 “ form and institution of the apostolic calling—
 “ lordship and rule are forbidden, ministration and
 “ service are commanded.’ From these words of
 “ a blessed man whom the whole church hath
 “ agreed to honour, it appears, that the pope has
 “ no right to possess himself of the goods of the
 “ church, as though he were lord of them, but
 “ that he is to be, with respect to them, as a mi-
 “ nister or servant, and the proctor for the poor.
 “ And would to God that the same proud and
 “ eager desire of authority, and lordship, which is
 “ now discovered by this seat of power, were
 “ aught else than a declension, preparing the
 “ pathway of antichrist. From the gospel, evi-
 “ dent it is, that the children of Christ’s kingdom
 “ were not produced by such means, but were
 “ the fruit of his poverty, his humility, and his
 “ suffering of injury. The same blessed man,

“ Bernard, and as far as I remember, in his third
 “ book to Eugenius, writeth thus, ‘ I fear not any
 “ greater evil befalling thee, than this eager thirst-
 “ ing for dominion.’ ”²⁸

CHAP.
 IV.
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²⁸ MS. Job. Seldeni B. 10. Fox. Acts and Monuments, i. 584. From the manner in which this document is printed in Fox, it is difficult to determine where the reformer concludes,

and the martyrologist begins. From examining the MS. I find the paper to be more extended and important than it had appeared to be.

CHAPTER V.

THE DOCTRINES OF WYCLIFFE AS KNOWN BEFORE THE DECEASE OF EDWARD.—OPINIONS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM BY THE PONTIFF.—LETTERS FROM THE POPE TO THE KING, THE PRIMATE, THE BISHOP OF LONDON, AND THE UNIVERSITY, REQUIRING THE IMMEDIATE SUPPRESSION OF THE REFORMER'S TENETS.—DISCUSSION ELICITED AT OXFORD BY THE PAPAL MANDATE.—WYCLIFFE'S APPEARANCE BEFORE THE PAPAL DELEGATES AT LAMBETH.—CONTENTS OF THE PAPER SAID TO HAVE BEEN DELIVERED TO THEM.—THE DOCUMENT A FAITHFUL EXHIBITION OF HIS SENTIMENTS RESPECTING THE LIMITS OF THE PAPAL AUTHORITY.—THE POWER OF THE CROWN OVER THE REVENUES OF THE CLERGY.—THE CLAIMS OF THE HIERARCHY, —AND THE PRIESTLY FUNCTION OF BINDING AND LOOSING.—HE IS ASSAILED BY AN ANONYMOUS DIVINE.—HIS INDIGNANT REPLY.

CHAP. V. HAVING attempted the prosecution of Wycliffe, the English clergy would feel themselves urged by new motives in opposing his efforts as a reformer—the repulse experienced from the power of Lancaster only serving to sharpen their resentment. What their unaided strength had failed to accomplish, might be anticipated from the more formidable influence of the papacy, and the assistance of the pontiff, in such a cause, it would be easy to obtain. We are not, indeed, informed of the charges which were to have been preferred against the rector of Lutterworth, before the convocation at St. Paul's. But some weeks later, we find the pope in possession of several statements of doctrine, said to be that of Dr. Wycliffe; and as these statements were received from England, it

is scarcely doubtful, that they were received from the persons whose authority, in the instance noticed, had proved too feeble to check the growing disaffection.

CHAP.
V.

Seventeen years had now intervened since the rise of Wycliffe's dispute with the mendicants; ten years also had passed since his name became known to the papal court by his appeal respecting the wardenship of Canterbury hall; and nearly the same period had elapsed since his spirited defence of the English parliament, in refusing the census granted by king John. We may also conclude, that his recent intercourse with the papal commissioners at Bruges, had contributed to render the dangerous singularities of his character and opinions more known at the papal residence. The discussions involved in that embassy would probably elicit some of his obnoxious tenets, and sometimes provoke the characteristic severity of his language, when adverting to the defects and the vices of the clergy. The due reporting of such matters to the pontiff, would be regarded by his envoys as an important part of their official obligations; but his holiness may have deemed it impolitic to have employed the testimony of his own delegates, in aid of measures opposed to the doctrine of Wycliffe, especially while it was certain, that the publishing of opinions injurious to the credit of the hierarchy, must, ere long, come before him in a less questionable shape, and from sources apparently less partial.

Wycliffe's
doctrine
well known
at this pe-
riod.
1360—1377.

The articles supplied by the pope, as containing the heretical doctrine imputed to Wycliffe, appear

Opinions
attributed
to him by
the pontiff.

CHAP. to have been selected, partly from his writings,
 IV. — and in part from his divinity lectures, and from private conversations. They consist of statements opposed to the doctrine of the pope's temporal power, and to the worldly possessions of the hierarchy; the former being regarded as a gross usurpation, the latter as the main source of the corruptions which had so long dishonoured the christian church. In the first five articles of this series, there is considerable obscurity. They appear, indeed, to be made up of loose and isolated expressions, caught by enemies from the lips of the reformer, and should not be regarded as presenting any fair view of his doctrine. In these, however, he is made to affirm, that it is not in the power of the human race, since the advent of Christ, to confer a political supremacy on St. Peter, and his descendants, for ever:—that to bestow on men such a civil dominion, is even beyond the power of God:—that charters of human origin cannot secure an eternal inheritance:—that the justified are not only entitled to all the good things of God, but actually enjoy them:—and that men act only as ministers of the divine will, in conferring dominion, whether in conferring a temporal dominion upon their natural offspring, or an eternal dominion upon their offspring, by imitation, in the school of Christ.

We shall presently notice Wycliffe's explanation of these articles. It will be sufficient here to remark, that the accusations which they contain, place the reformer before us as a conspicuous opponent of the doctrine which modestly declared

the successors of St. Peter to be as far superior to the kings of the earth, as the soul is more honourable than the body, and eternity more momentous than time. On the ground of this preposterous theory, the "Servant of the servants of God" had long affected to consider every civil as well as every religious immunity of the nations, as enjoyed more on the ground of sufferance from him, than in virtue of any right inherent in themselves. Of the remaining articles, four relate to the design of ecclesiastical property. In these it is stated as an acknowledged truth, that all such property is possessed conditionally, or for certain specified purposes; and on this ground it is affirmed to be the imperious obligation of sovereigns, to confiscate the temporalities of ecclesiastics who habitually abuse them.

But in this catalogue of heresies, there are nine propositions which relate to the doctrine of the age respecting spiritual censures. These, though scarcely noticed by historians, and equally neglected by Wycliffe's biographers, evidently belong to the most important peculiarities of his creed, and afford unquestionable proof of the vigour and intrepidity of his mind. In this class of articles, it is affirmed that no ecclesiastic, however elevated, can impart either good or evil by his benedictions, or by his censures, except as these are in agreement with the law of Christ. The consequence deduced is, that the adversaries of that law have nothing to hope from priestly absolution, and that men of an opposite character have as little to fear from the priestly anathema. It is farther stated, that the Saviour has not

CHAP.
V.
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CHAP.
V.

— afforded any example of extorting temporal things by spiritual penalties, but rather the reverse—and hence, that no such practice should be admitted among his followers. And while every priest, truly ordained, is declared competent to the ministry of every sacrament, it is in conclusion asserted, that the highest dignitaries, not excepting the pontiff himself, may be lawfully corrected by their inferiors, and even by the laity.

From this passing notice of the matters which now formed the accredited doctrines of our reformer, the reader will anticipate that a determined effort would be made to prevent their diffusion. The blow which was thus pointed against the overgrown possessions of churchmen, and which threatened, at the same moment, to dissolve the power of that “unlawful magic” which they had long exercised over the conscience of their victims, in relation to futurity, was perceived by many of the English clergy, and would not be less obvious to the sagacity of the papal court.

Papal letters to the prelates, the king, and the university. June 11, 1377.

On the same day, three bulls were despatched, addressed to the archbishop of Canterbury, and to the bishop of London; and these were accompanied by a fourth, in which the pontiff solicits the aid of the king; and by another, in which he demands the prompt obedience of the university of Oxford.¹ In all these letters, the pope extols the character of the English; and in those sent to the prelates, he applauds the Anglican church, as having frequently produced among her clergy, men enriched with a pure knowledge of the

¹ These letters are all inserted in the Appendix, No. XI.—XV.

scriptures, grave, devout, and the defenders of orthodoxy. But it is regretted that the zeal of the fathers has not been imbibed by the children. The report of heresy could now be distinctly heard at Rome, while the evil remained unopposed in England. Information had been received from persons truly worthy of credit, from which it appeared that John Wycliffe, rector of Lutterworth, in the diocese of Lincoln, and professor of divinity, with a fearlessness the offspring of a detestable insanity, had ventured to dogmatise and preach in favour of opinions wholly subversive of the church. For this cause, the parties addressed are required to seize the person of the offender, in the name of the pope; to commit him to prison; to obtain complete information as to his tenets; and transmitting such information to Rome, by a trusty messenger, they were to retain the heresiarch as their prisoner, until farther instruction should be received concerning him. Should they fail in attempting his apprehension, they are required, in the second pontifical letter, to affix a citation in such places as may bring it to the knowledge of the said Wycliffe, demanding his personal appearance before the pontiff, within three months from the date of such document. The prelates are farther instructed to employ their vigilance, that the king, the prince of Aquitain and Wales, and others of the nobility, and the counsellors of the sovereign, may not be defiled with the errors adverted to; but that they may rather learn to regard such opinions as hostile to all government,

CHAP. and be induced to afford their speedy and effective aid to destroy them.
 V.

The bull addressed to the king, differs from those conveyed to the bishops only as informing the monarch of the instructions which had been sent to those dignitaries, and as requiring him, from his known reverence for the apostolic see, to grant the said prelates his countenance and protection in discharging the duties imposed on them. In the official document borne by a special messenger to the university, the signs of religious declension in England are again deplored; and the doctrine of Wycliffe is again described as opposed to the existence of the church, and to all the forms of civil authority. That learned body is in consequence strictly enjoined, in virtue of that sacred obedience which is due to the apostolic letters, and on pain of losing all graces, indulgencies, and privileges granted to their university by the holy see, to prevent the teaching of any such conclusions as were imputed to John Wycliffe, and to cause the person of that offender to be committed to the custody of the archbishop of Canterbury, or to that of the bishop of London. Should others, defiled by his errors, attempt a resistance of this mandate, it is required, that with respect to them, the same summary methods should be adopted. On a comparison of these epistles, the reader will perceive that they are little more than transcripts of each other, excepting a brief reference to the particular persons addressed, and the special service required of them.

It should be observed that in the formidable

process which we now see directed against the rector of Lutterworth, there is no mention of any confronting of the accuser and the accused. On the contrary, the prelates are commanded to obtain their information respecting the heresies specified by secret means ; and having committed the reformer to prison, and extorted from him whatever might be obtained to determine his principles, the result of these concealed investigations was to be privately transmitted to the papal court. The agents of that court had been too long familiarized to such modes of procedure, to be capable of regarding them as involving any infringement of the rights of human nature. But Wycliffe often complained of these inquisitorial customs, which, by sheltering the informer from the responsibilities of his conduct, placed the means of revenge but too much at the bidding of the unprincipled and malevolent.

It should also be remarked, that the bishop, the monarch, and the university, are alike admonished, that the errors taught by Wycliffe were of the same class with those promulgated some fifty years previously by John de Ganduno and Marcillus, —men, whose memory is declared to be infamous, in consequence of censures pronounced upon them by pope John the twenty-second. The first of these persons was a distinguished lawyer ; and, as his name imports, a native of Ghent. Marcillus was of the same profession, and is described as Marcillus of Padua. With respect to their tenets, since they are thus identified with those of Wycliffe, it will be proper to

CHAP. V. observe, that they appear to have been elicited by the controversy which had been so long perpetuated between the pontiffs and the German emperors, to determine the limits of the monarchical as distinguished from the pontifical power. Sheltered by his imperial majesty from the violence of the court of Rome, these learned men were not satisfied with barely questioning the doctrine of the pope's temporal power, but affirmed it to be the right of sovereigns to preside over every temporality of the church, and even to regulate the details of spiritual discipline, as far as that might be deemed necessary to the independence of their territories, or to the rights of national churches.² Marcillus, indeed, appears to have viewed the pastors of the primitive church as possessing the same office and authority; and to have declared, accordingly, that every step of that distinction which had been conceded to the pope was an innovation and a grievance. We have no ground, however, for supposing, that the English reformer was really conversant with the

² Mosheim (iii. 348, 349,) notices Marcillus and Ganduno, with others, who assisted them in waging the war of the emperor against the pope. But among the men whom he describes as highly and deservedly esteemed on account of their eminent parts and learning, the most conspicuous place is assigned to our countryman, Occam. He is said to have "surpassed them " all in the keenness and spirit of his " satire; and hence his Dialogues, together with his other productions, " which were perused with avidity, " and transmitted down to succeeding " generations, gave, as it were, a

" mortal blow to the ambition and " majesty of the Roman pontiffs." Marcillus published, among other pieces, a work entitled "Defensor " pro Ludovico Bavaro adversus usur- " patam Romani Pontificis Jorisdic- " tionem." This memorable work he produced while professor at Vienna. It was published at Frankfort, in 1592, by Franc Gomarus, 8vo. But nearly half a century earlier, one of his most obnoxious pieces was translated and published in English, under the title, "The Defence of Peace," &c. fol.—Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, i. 36.

productions of these writers. The works of the earlier fathers, and the more recent literature of his own country, appear to have been the chief source, next to the scriptures, of the doctrines which he taught. His studies, relating to the civil and canon law, must have rendered him in some degree familiar with the disputes, which through so long an interval, had divided the empire and the church. That his opinions were opposed to the secular pretensions of the pope, and of his dependents, is certain; and whether they were derived from Marcillus, or from any other quarter, it required no little hardihood to publish them through a powerful kingdom, where, if we may credit the repeated declarations of the pontiff, they had been hitherto unknown.

The documents which thus appealed both to the civil and religious authorities, claiming their activity to eradicate these seeds of spiritual insubordination, bear the date of June 1377; but they either failed to reach this country at the usual period, or were reserved in secrecy, until a favourable moment should occur for producing them. It is not improbable, that the confidence placed in the learning and integrity of the reformer, by the commons house of parliament, in the following October, had created new alarm. Wycliffe's decisive answer to the question proposed by that body, must have destroyed all hope of putting him to silence, except by the most coercive measures. In the ensuing month the papal instructions were no longer a secret. But before the arrival of that period, Edward the third had

CHAP. expired, and the epistle which solicited his aid was
 V. probably unknown to his grandson and successor,
 ——— Richard the second.

Discussion
 created at
 Oxford by
 the papal
 mandate.

In Oxford, the arrival of the papal envoy, with the demands of his master, created serious discussions. On the question, whether the bull of the pontiff should be received or rejected, the former resolution was at length adopted. But it was done with no little reluctance;³ and, in their subsequent conduct, nothing appears farther from the purpose of the heads of the university, than to become the instruments of committing the person of Wycliffe to the mercy of his enemies. Their caution, in the present instance, may have arisen in part from the jealousy with which, in those ages, almost every act of papal interference was regarded by such establishments; for the despotism which had so completely invaded the liberties of the church, was variously obtruded into the seats of learning. But the letter of the pontiff had anticipated opposition from the adherents of the reformer; and these, it is evident, were at this moment sufficiently numerous and powerful to produce the delays adverted to, and to prevent the seminary from incurring the odium of at once denouncing its brightest ornament.

The appeal made to the prelates was more successful. Sudbury, now archbishop of Canterbury, wrote to the chancellor of Oxford, reminding him of the papal mandate, and insisting on its being executed in all things diligently and faithfully.

³ Walsingham is quite astounded at the infatuation which could produce the hesitation alluded to.—Hist. Ann.

He is also required to obtain, by the assistance of CHAP. V. the most orthodox and skilful divines, correct information as to the said heresies, and to convey, with his statement of the opinions certainly propagated by Wycliffe, his own judgment respecting them, delivered under the university seal. It was moreover enjoined upon him, that, as chancellor, he should cite the erroneous teacher, or cause him to be cited, personally to appear before his ecclesiastical superiors, in the church of St. Paul's, London, on the thirtieth court day from the date of the citation.

This letter was written on the eighteenth of December, and early in the ensuing year Wycliffe appeared before a synod, at Lambeth. Wycliffe's appearance at Lambeth. 1378. The duke of Lancaster no longer ruled in the cabinet; but events discovered that the reformer was far from depending even on his aid in the object before him. On the court and the populace his doctrines were daily making a powerful impression. The latter, alarmed for his safety, surrounded the place of meeting, and with many of the citizens forced their way into the chapel, where the parties were convened, proclaiming their attachment to the person and opinions of the rector of Lutterworth. The dismay created by this tumult was augmented, when Sir Lewis Clifford entered the court, and in the name of the queen mother, forbade the bishops proceeding to any definite sentence respecting the doctrine or the conduct of Wycliffe. Thus, by the better zeal of the laity, the plans of ecclesiastics to suppress the tenets of the reformation, were again frustrated. Walsingham, in

CHAP. relating this disastrous event, betrays the temper of
 V. the wolf when robbed of his prey. The delegates, he observes, “shaken as a reed with the wind, “became soft as oil in their speech, to the open “forfeiture of their own dignity, and the injury “of the whole church. With such fear were “they struck, that you would think them a man “who hears not, or one in whose mouth are no “reproofs.”⁴

Summary of the paper said to have been delivered by him to the papal delegates.

It is the same historian who relates, that at this meeting Wycliffe delivered a paper to the prelates containing a statement of his opinions; and by various modern writers this document has been most unfairly represented. It has been more than insinuated, that certain of its explanations were less the result of ingenuousness than of timidity. Whatever is known of Wycliffe's previous character, is opposed to this conclusion; as is the fact of his growing influence at this time, both with the people and with many of the most considerable persons of the realm. It is also unquestionable, that many opinions were attributed to him which he never either avowed or entertained. It is no matter of surprise, therefore, that certain of his tenets, as explained by himself, should be less extravagant than as put forth by his enemies.

⁴ Spelman, ii. 625. Lewis, 315. A similar interference of the queen mother had occurred a little previously to terminate the dispute between the Londoners and the duke of Lancaster. The persons delegated “to entreat the citizens to be reconciled “with the duke” were Sir Alfred Lewer, Sir Simon Burley, and this

same Sir Lewis Clifford. And “the “Londoners answered, that they, for “the honour of the princess, would “obey and do with all reverence “what she would require.”—Fox's Acts and Monuments, i. 559. Walsingham, also, relates, that a similar tumult arose during the trial of Ashton the Lollard.—Ann. 1382.

Nor are we sure that the paper which appears in Walsingham has wholly escaped mutilation. It is certain that a copy, subsequently published by the author, was somewhat more extended and explicit in several particulars.⁵ But passing over this point, nothing more is required, to place the conduct of the reformer, at this crisis, in a light truly commanding, than that some allowance be made for his lingering partiality to an obsolete method of reasoning derived from the schools, and that the *whole* of his statement be attended to.⁶

It is thus his remarks are introduced: "In the first place, I protest publicly, as I have often done, that I resolve with my whole heart, and by the grace of God, to be a sincere christian; and, while life shall last, to profess and to defend the law of Christ as far as I have power. If through ignorance, or from any other cause, I shall fail in this determination, I ask forgiveness of God, and, retracting the error, submit with

⁵ Wals. ad Ann. The second paper is in the Appendix, No. XVI. It differs from the first but in the particulars that will be stated in the text.

⁶ A particular emphasis is laid on attending to the *whole* of the reformer's statement, for the following among other reasons. The scholastic philosophy introduced the existing custom of dividing a text of scripture into a multitude of parts. The greater, also, the number of distinct propositions that could be deduced from a passage, the more obvious was the genius of the preacher. We see the influence of this taste on the mind of Wycliffe himself, in one of his latest pieces against the friars, where he accuses that body of holding more than fifty heresies, and

these are made to form so many sections of his work; and even in this instance his moderation appears, when compared with the founder of the Occamists, who charged the pontiff, John the twenty-second, with holding more than seventy propositions, deserving the same designation, (Bul. Hist. Univer. Paris, iv. 7). In such cases a distinction must often have been made, where the difference was not very evident, and some of the separate propositions, if they could be said to possess any meaning, it must frequently have been very little—quite as little, perhaps, as the assertion of our reformer when simply declaring that the papal dominion must be of limited duration.

CHAP.
V.

“ humility to the correction of the church. And
 “ to prevent the christian from being scandalized
 “ on my account, since I am prosecuted for my
 “ faith; and since the notions of children, and of
 “ weak persons, concerning what I have taught,
 “ are conveyed by others, who are more than
 “ children, beyond the seas, even to the court of
 “ Rome, I am willing to commit my opinions to
 “ writing. These also, I am now ready to defend
 “ even unto death; and the same duty I regard as
 “ binding upon all christians, but particularly on
 “ the bishop of Rome, and on the whole priest-
 “ hood of the church. In my conclusions, I have
 “ followed the sacred scriptures and the holy
 “ doctors, both in their meaning and in their
 “ modes of expression; this I am willing to
 “ show; but should it be proved that such con-
 “ clusions are opposed to the faith, I am prepared
 “ very willingly to retract them.”⁷ From this
 preface, equally characterized by firmness and
 discretion, the writer proceeds to notice the tenets
 imputed to him, and which had been denounced
 as false, or as of injurious tendency. In the
 pope’s schedule, these articles are numbered
 with scarcely any reference to their import; as
 noticed in this place, they will be classed ac-
 cording to the matters to which they relate.⁸

⁷ Such confessions are not unfre-
 quent in the reformer’s writings. It
 is thus he concludes a passage, in
 which he has denied the tenets of or-
 thodoxy with respect to priestly ab-
 solution: “ If any man would show
 “ more plainly this sentence, by the

“ law of God, I would meekly assent
 “ thereto. And if any man prove this
 “ to be false or against the law of God,
 “ that I have now said herein, I would
 “ meekly revoke it.” — Codd. Ric.
 Jamesii, Bibl. Bod. i.

⁸ See Appendix, No. XVII.

The first article declared it to be above the power of the human race, since the advent of Christ, to confer on St. Peter and his successors, the political government of the world, for ever. On this statement, Wycliffe remarked, that, if understood literally, the phrase "for ever" meaning eternity, it contained a truth too obvious to be disputed, since the divine purpose, which has limited the existence of the present world, has, in consequence, fixed a period to all its political relations. This arrangement is then noticed as being no matter of conjecture, but as forming a leading feature in the economy established with respect to man and this world, through the mediation of Christ. The *perpetuity* thus denied to the political dominion of the pontiffs was not, indeed, the only limitation which the reformer knew to be opposed by the scriptures to that scheme of boundless usurpation; and he may have erred, in presuming so far upon the candour of his readers, as to expect that their judgment of his doctrine on this subject, would be deferred until the several parts of his statement relating to it should be duly considered. This, as will appear in the sequel, was the amount of his offending.⁹

CHAP.
V.
Wycliffe's
sentiments
on the limits
of the papal
authority.

⁹ My vindication of Wycliffe's conduct at this crisis, is founded, chiefly, on two facts:—

1st. We have no evidence that he had hitherto entertained opinions, or employed expressions, concerning the pontiffs, at all different from what we find in the paper now given to his judges. Mr. Lewis, indeed, represents him as having already published the following pieces: Trialogus. Sen-

tence of the Curse Expounded. On Prelates. On Clerks - Possessioners. How Antichrist and his Clerks feren true Priests fro preaching Christ's Gospel. How Satan and his Priests, and his feyned Religions casten by three cursed heresies, &c. And his tract on Servants and Lords. (Life of Wiclif, c. iii. 37—43.) If this representation were correct, then some of the strongest things ever said by

CHAP. V. The second conclusion affirms, that the imparting of such a dominion to any order of men, is

Wycliffe against the papacy, were things said before his present appearance at Lambeth; and the comparison to be made is between the statements contained in these "Conclusions," and passages in which the papal power is denounced as the predicted Antichrist, and as stained with almost every corruption. This representation, however, though adopted by Mr. Lewis, and adopted apparently by every writer on this subject from the age of the reformer to our own, is *altogether erroneous*. The *Triologus* contains a reference (lib. iv. c. 36.) to the memorable council, which was disturbed by an earthquake—an event, which belongs to the year 1382. That work, accordingly, could not have been published until at least four years after these "Conclusions." The "Sentence of the Curse," &c. includes an allusion to the war conducted against the antipope by Spencer, bishop of Norwich, describing it as a war maintained "for the love of two false priests, who are open Antichrists," c. xv. But this affair belongs to the year 1383. In his work on Prelates, the reformer adverts to the same event, observing, that "if pardons should be granted, it should be to make peace, and not to make dissensions and wars," c. xiii. This MS. contains also repeated allusions to the conduct of the prelates in endeavouring to silence the reformer's "poor priests;" and we learn nothing as to the existence of the latter class of men, until some time after the year 1377, c. vi. xvi. xxiii. xxvii. In the MS. on Clerks-Possessioners, the same events are noticed, and especially the frequent persecutions of the reformer's itinerant preachers, "because they live poorly and justly, and go about teaching God's law." c. xvi. The whole of the work, intitled, "How

"Antichrist and his Clerks," &c. is employed in vindicating the prominence given by these poor priests to the office of preaching, and must of course belong to a period subsequent to the commencement of their labours. The piece on "Satan and his Priests," &c. not only refers to the same state of things, but to the opposition excited by the translation of the Scriptures into English; an achievement which was also subsequent to this time. And as to the tract "On Servants and Lords," it was evidently elicited by the insurrection under Wat Tyler, and throughout is meant to vindicate the reformer's doctrine from the charge of favouring a spirit of anarchy. Of all this the reader will have further proof as these works shall come under his notice. I must repeat, therefore, that we have no evidence that there was any one doctrine maintained by Wycliffe up to 1378, at all more hostile to the papal power, or to the reigning superstitions, than were the conclusions then submitted to his judges. This view of things places the conduct of the reformer, at this crisis, in an entirely new light; and while there is not a circumstance to warrant a suspicion of its correctness, I must contend that Wycliffe is fairly vindicated from the long reiterated accusation of having concealed his opinions to escape the terrors of power. Rome was not denounced as Antichrist until Rome became his prosecutor. My own judgment on this point was long the common one; and if I have applauded the courage of our proto-reformer, where others have deemed it necessary to apologise for his frailty, I have done this contrary to my own anticipations, and as the consequence of more correct information.

2. The second fact on which I found

even above the power of God.¹⁰ But this asser-
 tion is interpreted after the same manner. It is
 evident, that if the natural power of the Deity be
 restrained, it must be by some moral considera-
 tions; and the impossibility here asserted, is
 viewed as founded on the moral claims of the
 spouse of Christ, and the faithfulness of God,
 with respect to his promises. In Wycliffe's
 statement relative to these conclusions, which
 was published subsequently to his appearance
 before the synod, there is no addition made to
 the above explanation; and the propositions
 contained in this and in the preceding article,
 are evidently treated by him as axioms, from
 which he is about to pass to more definite rea-
 sonings.

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V.

the vindication of Wycliffe's conduct in this instance, is, that while the articles which he may be thought to have softened down are not more than four, the remaining, to which no suspicion of this kind can attach, amount to more than three times that number:—the latter, too, being in their nature such as to require equivocation quite as much as the former, if that art was to be at all resorted to. The only fair inference, therefore, is, that the few points on which the reformer has not expressed himself to the taste of modern readers, are points on which his views were, at this time, different from theirs.—Note to the second edition.

¹⁰ That must be a spiritless teacher who never startled his auditors by a paradox, or roused their attention by a boldness of statement resembling the above proposition. By the schoolmen this rhetorical manœuvre was frequently resorted to, sometimes merely

to display their ingenuity by adroitly escaoping from a difficulty, and sometimes for the more laudable purpose of securing attention to the illustration of some important truth. Thus Anselm, the reputed father of this science, gravely declares, in one of his popular discourses, that the will of man is omnipotent; and proceeding to explain his statement, he remarks, that in heaven the will of man will be so disciplined as to desire nothing but what the Omnipotent will be pleased to confer, and that thus it will be itself omnipotent.—Sermon on Rev. chap. vii. It would be easy to cite other specimens of this kind of reasoning, which, in the middle ages, was not thought to betray any thing either of littleness or insincerity. There is not, perhaps, another schoolman, except Bradwardine, who was so little disposed to this sort of trifling as our reformer.

CHAP. V. The third article is of the same description, stating it as impossible to become entitled to an eternal inheritance, by virtue of charters which are of human origin. In his subsequent answer, however, he observes on this conclusion, that it was a passing remark, which arose in his conversation with a certain divine who magnified such charters so far as to prefer their authority to that of the scriptures. "To which," he states, "I replied, that it would be much better to attend to the defence and exposition of the scriptures, since many such charters were necessarily incapable of execution." The same casual origin may, with much probability, be ascribed to the preceding articles. They appear very like the crude information which the reformer notices, as supplied against him, "by children and weak persons." In his view, however, even these propositions, elementary as they were, possessed a tendency to imprint on worldly men the faith of Christ, and to prevent their being drowned in the sea of a "world which is passing away, with the lusts thereof."

As these introductory articles contained no heretical sentiment, it was in Wycliffe's manner to dispose of them by explanations which, while sufficient for that purpose, left his peculiar opinions to be connected with those subsequent propositions which more obviously referred to them.¹¹

¹¹ In the sixth article of the second paper, he refers for his entire doctrine to the statements introduced in connexion with the sixth, the sixteenth, and seventeenth in the previous do-

cument, adding, that the latter observations were inserted, that the preceding reasoning might not appear to be inapplicable "by its remoteness."

It is in the last article of the series that the reformer enters upon the delicate question of the duty of christians with respect to a delinquent pontiff. The doctrine avowed by him on this subject, must have been heard with no little displeasure by the true adherents of the papacy. From the fourth century to the present period, it had been the effort of the popes, or of their flatterers, to place the accredited representatives of St. Peter above all human control. Their equals, by whom alone they might be judged, were not supposed to exist; and thus the correction of a pontiff, came to be extensively regarded, as a work which the Deity was alone competent to perform. Against this impious tenet, and in defiance of the power of its advocates, Wycliffe delivers his solemn protest. By Walsingham, he is introduced as stating that, in certain cases, an ecclesiastic, and even the bishop of Rome, may be corrected by his inferiors, and by these, not only from among the clergy, but from among the laity. He is said to have contended, moreover, that this might be done whenever the good of the church should require it. Wycliffe does not disown this doctrine, alarming and offensive as he found it to be. In support of it, he assumes the pope to be a peccable brother, sharing, in common with other men, in a tendency to what is sinful; and thence infers his equal subjection to the laws of brotherly reproof. He accordingly writes, “ If it be evident, therefore, that the college
“ of cardinals are remiss in performing this ser
“ vice, for the necessary welfare of the church, it
“ is obvious that others, and it may chance prin-

CHAP. V. “cipally the laity, may reprove and implead him, “ and reduce him to a better life.” After this statement, it is intimated, that the impeachment of a pontiff, is certainly a work not to be rashly undertaken; but it is also remarked, that where ground for such a proceeding really exists, to shrink from the duty, is not only to suppose the pope an offender, but an offender beyond the hope of recovery. With his characteristic firmness and devotion, he concludes, “ God forbid that truth should be condemned by the church of Christ, because it “ sounds unpleasantly in the ear of the guilty, or of “ the ignorant!—for then, the entire faith of the “ scriptures will be exposed to condemnation.”

In judging of Wycliffe’s conduct, at this critical period of his history, common fairness requires, that the reader should connect the explanations attached to the previous articles, which refer to the *duration* of the pontifical power, with these statements, annexed to the proposition which related more immediately to its *character*. If the laity might be justly employed in impleading a pontiff, and bringing even the successor of St. Peter to a better life; the subordinate members of the hierarchy were, of course, regarded as subject to the same kind of discipline. The right of the people, also, to judge as to what is, or is not, for the good of the church, is distinctly assumed as at the foundation of this doctrine. It is nevertheless avowed, committed to writing, and delivered to the English clergy, in their character as the delegates of the papal power!¹²

¹² What is the amount of the charge preferred against Wycliffe on the ground of this article, and the two connected with it? If it mean any

thing, it is that while these articles appear to contain a renunciation of the pope’s temporal power, the explanations, which the reformer has attached

It will be proper, also, to consider the obscure article already noticed as referring to the authority of human charters, in connexion with the sixth, the sixteenth, and the seventeenth in the same series. These are all variously related to the same subject, and present a gradual development of Wycliffe's opinions, concerning the authority pertaining to secular lords with respect to the temporalities of the christian church. In the first of the three articles, more nearly relating to this important question, it is stated, "that if God is, "temporal lords may lawfully, and meritoriously, "take away the goods of fortune from a delinquent "church." Here, also, the reformer's reasonings have called forth censures, which a little reflection in some, and a little integrity in others, would have been sufficient to prevent. It is thus he commences the statement of his doctrine on this point: "If God is, he is almighty; and if so, he "may prescribe to secular lords the exercise of "the authority supposed in the proposition stated, "and then to perform the supposed service, would "be most plainly their duty." Such is *a part* of Wycliffe's answer, to the question relating to the seat of sovereignty with respect to ecclesiastical wealth; and had this been the whole of his

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V.

On the
power of the
crown over
the revenues
of the
clergy.

to them, do not contain it. But who can believe that Wycliffe could have felt any difficulty in renouncing a tenet which had been rejected by king, lords, and commons, including a unanimous vote of the prelates, so late as the year 1366? Or can that man be fairly charged with fearing to deny the authority of the pontiff's as extended over the persons and property of the

laity, who, in this same paper, does not fear to deny that authority as extended to the most privileged possessions of the clergy? So intelligent, however, and so candid, is the reasoning brought to this subject, by that "stream of authorities" which a certain anonymous critic would have had me "ingenuous" enough to follow. Note to the second edition.

CHAP. V. reply, it might have warranted the triumph of his adversaries. And frequently, and most dishonestly, has it been given, as though it really did include all that he dared to avow, at the present moment, on this point. On a comparison of the explanation attached to this article in the paper submitted to the delegates, with that given by the reformer in his second answer, it will appear that the "remoteness" of his reasoning in this particular, which has so greatly offended modern discernment, was not a secret to its author; and that nothing was farther from his intention, than to quit the theme, which he was thus distantly approaching, without committing himself to a more decisive contact with its difficulties. At no period, did he sanction an invasion of the property of the clergy, "to the injury of the church; or except in forms "and cases limited by law." The change contemplated, was not to be effected by the misguided passions of the multitude, nor by the rapacity of irreligious statesmen, but, was one to be regulated by a devout reference to the law of Christ. To his remarks, on the sixteenth and seventeenth articles, in the schedule received from the pontiff, he refers, as expressing his genuine doctrine. In those articles, he is accused of teaching, that all church endowments are left conditionally; that if the clergy fail to apply their wealth to the end which it was designed to promote, it devolves on the magistrate to enforce such an application of it; and that in every such case, the civil power is not only authorized to do this, but if needful to the reformation of the order, to deprive churchmen

of their possessions entirely; and this, though the most alarming censures of the church should be employed to prevent it. Such is the doctrine which Wycliffe is described as holding, with respect to the enormous wealth of the ecclesiastical orders; and in his conclusions, instead of being denied, evaded, or softened down, it is fully and distinctly acknowledged as a part of his creed. With the prelacy of England as his judges, and the papal power as their ally, he fears not to add, that if there be any difference between the obligations of the magistrate, when referring to ecclesiastical, as distinguished from civil endowments, those which bind upon him an inspection of the former, are the most sacred, as the issues depending on his fidelity are the most momentous.

It was thus that the reformer denied to the Roman bishops the sovereignty which they had so long claimed with respect to the property of every religious establishment in Europe. A censure, also, was thus pronounced on the conduct of those national hierarchies, who, to evade the claims of the monarch on their ample resources, had often descended to plead for this supremacy of the pontiffs, as extending to their possessions, no less than to their faith. In the theory of Wycliffe, the last appeal is made to the crown, and not to the mitre; and the parties acting upon it, if assailed by the thunders of the church, are viewed as possessing a sufficient protection from such weapons in the certain justice of their cause. The reader will perceive, that in the supposed case, the balance of integrity and discernment, in judging as to the

CHAP. nature of religion, and as to the best means of
 ——— V. ——— promoting it, is presumed to be in favour of the laity, as opposed to the clergy. It was, doubtless, by such steps, that the mind of the English people was prepared to adopt two maxims, the reception of which was strictly necessary to the emancipation of their country:—first, that a reduction of ecclesiastical property may be essential to a permanent ecclesiastical reform; and, secondly, that to effect this, the power of the magistrate was fully competent.

In two of the remaining articles, the reformer is made to state, that every justified person is not only entitled to all the good things of God, but actually enjoys them; and that a man may confer dominion, whether temporal, upon his natural offspring, or eternal, upon his spiritual offspring in the school of Christ, only as a minister or instrument of the divine will. These propositions are admitted to be true, and they relate to some theological speculations which Wycliffe is said to have derived from the writings of Augustine; but to which, it is certain, the reformer never attached any serious importance. In their present form, it is difficult to attach any definite meaning to them; nor does the passing notice afterwards bestowed upon them, render them greatly more intelligible.¹³

¹³ His piece in reply to the question proposed to him by the first parliament of Richard the second, shows, that he had then learnt to believe, that where the morals of a priesthood had become seriously corrupt, their office was the forfeiture incurred. He knew not, in the case of the clergy, how to distinguish between the man and his

office; but that he could do so with respect to civil rulers is unquestionable, from his known esteem for John of Gaunt, at a time when his connexion with Catherine Swinford was such as to involve him in the guilt of mortal sin.—*Godwin's Life of Chaucer*, vol. ii. 229, 231. The following are noticed by Wycliffe, in one of his treatises, as

It will at the same time be remembered, that the CHAP. opponents of the reformer have accused him of V.—
 holding a doctrine, which they designate, “domi-
 “nion founded in grace;” and to excite the alarm
 of the opulent and the powerful, the tenet intended
 by this phrase was eagerly promulgated as not
 less opposed to civil, than to ecclesiastical au-
 thority. This doctrine will claim our attention
 in another place. It will be sufficient here to re-
 mark, that when the process now instituted against
 the rector of Lutterworth commenced, he was
 known as the chaplain of Edward the third; as
 having derived his ecclesiastical preferments from
 the favour of his sovereign; and as a man recently
 appointed by the English parliament to advocate
 the claims of the crown before the papal commis-
 sioners at Bruges; also, as the intimate friend of
 the duke of Lancaster, the most opulent subject
 in the state. That the man thus connected, was
 the advocate of doctrines unfriendly to the autho-
 rity of the civil power, will hardly be supposed,
 excepting where prejudice has placed the mind
 beyond the reach of conviction. It is true, that
 many of his later productions, while abounding
 with exhortations to obedience, discover the
 warmest attachment to every principle of equity
 and kindness, inculcating such virtues, as the pe-
 culiar obligation of rulers, and of the affluent.
 These we shall again advert to, but must here
 state, that his boldest censures of magisterial

the signs of freedom from the guilt of
 mortal sin. “When a man will gladly
 “and willingly hear the word of God:
 “when he knoweth himself prepared

“to do good works; when he is willing
 “to flee sin; when a man can be sorry
 “for his sins.”—MS. Cotton. Titus, D.
 xix. 122. See chapter on his opinions.

CHAP. V. negligence or crime, are commonly guarded against
 ——— that abuse which the zeal of his opponents has
 been so forward to connect with them.¹⁴

Of the
 hierarchy.

The fifteenth conclusion we have noticed, as stating that a priest is no less competent to the ministry of every sacrament than a bishop. For this doctrine Wycliffe distinctly pleads; observing in its defence, that “the power of priesthood is a matter which may not exist in a degree either more or less.” That there may be just ground for restraining or extending the official services of the inferior clergy, according to existing practices, is admitted; but he concludes by describing the distinction between such clerks and their prelates, as consisting simply in a difference of *jurisdiction*, and not in a difference of *character*.

Wycliffe's
 doctrine
 concerning
 the spiritual
 power of the
 clergy.

The articles in this series, still demanding our attention, are eight in number. These, however, all relate to the nature of spiritual censures, or to the principles which should regulate their application. With respect to their application, it is delivered as the doctrine of the reformer, that they should never be employed as the instrument of revenge, inasmuch as the passion itself is forbidden, and because the known justice of God should be sufficient to limit the use of the powers which he has intrusted to man, to such matters

¹⁴ It appears that the ministerial, or, more properly, subordinate character asserted of all human decisions, in the fourteenth article, was connected, in the mind of Wycliffe, with the important maxim of appeal to the word of God, as the only absolute authority. In its isolated form, the proposition may appear trivial or ob-

scure; but it is certain, that it was not considered, either by the reformer or by his judges, as standing alone. See the chapter on the reformer's opinions, where it will appear, that the doctrine of “dominion founded in grace,” instead of being a “favourite” tenet, is one to which scarcely any attention is given in the course of his writings.

only as are known to be opposed to that justice. CHAP. V.
 Their employment, especially, as a punishment
 for withholding temporal offerings from the clergy,
 is not only declared to be without the sanction of
 scripture precedent, but is described as in oppo-
 sition to it. In the writer's more acknowledged
 statement of this doctrine, its truth is illustrated
 by an appeal to the conduct of the Saviour, who
 refused to call down fire from heaven to consume
 the Samaritans, though they had most wickedly
 refused him the rights of hospitality. In the
 twelfth article, also, the practice of exacting a
 revenue for the clergy, by adding the worldly
 power of the magistrate to the spiritual censure
 of the priest, is condemned as being at variance
 with the lessons and examples of holy writ, and
 of the fathers. It is admitted, on the other hand,
 that there are some human causes, with which the
 sanctions of religion might be connected, as an
 auxiliary influence; but in such cases, which are
 considered as extreme, it is the relation of the
 supposed offence to the claims of God, which is
 viewed as calling for the interposition of a species
 of authority so sacred, and so widely abused.

Such, according to the paper delivered to the
 prelates, was the doctrine of Wycliffe, as to the
 uses of ecclesiastical censures in relation to pro-
 perty. In his statement, published immediately
 afterwards, it is repeated, that the employment of
 the penalty of excommunication, and of the power
 of the magistrate, as instruments to swell the
 revenue of the priesthood, are customs which
 were unknown in the better ages of christianity;

CHAP. and the change from the system of voluntary con-
 ———— V. ———— tribution, to that of force, is deplored as one of
 the worldly corruptions introduced into the church,
 “ by her endowment under Constantine.”¹⁵

But it was not only the improper application of this power, that the reformer was anxious to correct; the power itself, as generally understood, he regarded as imaginary; and the practices connected with it were devoutly opposed, as involving the most serious delusion and impiety. “ We know,” he observes, “ that it is impos-
 “ sible that the vicar of Christ, merely by his
 “ bulls, though concurring with his own will,
 “ and that of his college of cardinals, should really
 “ qualify or disqualify any man. This is evident
 “ from the point of catholic doctrine which re-
 “ quires our Lord, in every vicarious operation,
 “ to maintain the primacy. Therefore, as in
 “ every qualifying of a subject, it is first required
 “ that the subject to be qualified should be meet
 “ and worthy of it; and as, also, in every act of
 “ disqualification, there must first be some de-
 “ merit in the person disqualified requiring it; it
 “ follows, that the act of qualifying or disqualify-
 “ ing, is not simply from the ministry of the vicar
 “ of Christ, but from above, or from some other
 “ cause.” In the thirteenth proposition, this as-
 sumption of an unconditional authority, in the
 forms of binding and loosing, is pronounced to be
 destructive of the whole catholic faith; to be a
 usurpation of the Lord’s absolute power; and no

¹⁵ In his after notes on these articles he also states, that it may be a greater act of religious charity, under certain circumstances, to deprive the church of her wealth, than it was to bestow it.

less than blasphemy. But while the humble worshipper is assured, that he has nothing to fear from the censures of men, so long as he shall be a follower of that which is good; he is wisely admonished, that the sentence of the priest is not to be indiscriminately contemned—since it may, in some cases, be the echo of that pronounced against him by a much higher power. The following statement includes the whole of the fourteenth article, and the sum of Wycliffe's doctrine, on what is technically designated the power of the keys. "We ought to believe, that then only does a christian priest bind or loose, when he simply obeys the law of Christ; because it is not lawful for him to bind or loose, but in virtue of that law; and, by consequence, not unless it be in conformity to it." The substance of his teaching, on this momentous question, therefore, is, — that men should render themselves familiar with what the law of God prohibits or enjoins; and confiding in their own judgment, instead of yielding their conscience to a priest, should feel dismayed by the frown of the church, and persuaded of safety as connected with her smile, only as her curse or blessing should be known to hold agreement with the recorded will of the Eternal.

Such is the sum of the reformer's opinions, as stated to the papal delegates, in the commencement of the year 1378.¹⁶ In the document which we have thus analyzed, it will be seen that there is

¹⁶ That this meeting took place early in the present year, we learn from the fact, that pope Gregory died in the following March, and his decease is

particularly deplored by Walsingham, as it proved a death-blow to the proceeds against Wycliffe.—Hist. ubi supra.

CHAP. V. little referring, except by way of implication, to what may with strict propriety be described as theological opinion. It is highly important, indeed, as relating to such opinions, since the many things which it does imply, occur with all the certainty of direct statement. Its chief value, however, must be viewed as arising from its being a definite record of Wycliffe's sentiments, at this period, respecting the limits to be imposed on the despotic pretensions of the papacy, and on the scarcely less extravagant pretensions of the great body of the clergy in every state of christendom; also, as to the authority of the magistrate, as compared with that of churchmen; as to the legitimate means of securing to the clergy an appropriate revenue; and as to the power vested in the priest, with regard to the present character or the future allotment of the worshipper.¹⁷ On

¹⁷ All the articles included in the papers which have claimed our chief attention in this chapter, may be traced in different forms among those condemned by the council of Constance as the tenets of Wycliffe. The following is the language of its decree. "The council, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, reproves and condemns all and every one of those articles by this perpetual decree; forbidding all catholics, on pain of the anathema, to teach, preach, or hold any of those articles; and commanding all the ordinaries of places, and inquisitors of the crime of heresy, to keep a watchful eye upon and to punish the contraveners according to the canons." Lenfant's Constance, i. 198, 217—231, 414—420. Among the propositions attributed to Wycliffe in that assembly, are the following;—that God cannot annihilate

any thing—that he could not make the world less or larger; that he could not create a greater number of rational natures—that God is every creature, and that every creature is God. But it is obvious, that these statements, if not the mere inferences deduced from his doctrine by enemies, must have been accompanied by explanations consonant with Wycliffe's known piety. Thus by every creature being in God, he merely meant, as the stream is in the fountain, the ideas of their existence being coeval with the divine nature, and inseparable from it. By the other propositions, he probably meant, that the creating hand was stayed where it was best to stay; and hence, as in the articles noticed above, the attribute of omnipotence is revered, but is considered as subject to the control of wisdom and goodness.—Ibid. 419, 420.

all these topics, Wycliffe's opinions, as now recorded, were such as to provoke the serious displeasure of the ecclesiastical orders. But the mind which had learned to view the spiritual weapons of the church as powerless, except when employed according to the teaching of holy writ, was not to be dismayed by them, as directed against conclusions which had been adopted as the result of much painful and devout investigation. From the partial notices of this paper by some writers, we are left to suppose that its explanations were such as to furnish but little that could awaken the fears of the contemporary clergy. The silence, however, which was instantly imposed on Wycliffe, by the synod to which it is said to have been submitted, is not the only event bespeaking the ready perception of his judges, as to the dangerous tendency of the doctrine which he had avowed. A professor of divinity, whose zeal was directed to familiarize the mind of his contemporaries with the notion of a right vested in the laity, to judge, and even to correct their instructors—extending this process of reform, as circumstances might require, to the pontiff himself, must have been regarded by the ecclesiastics of the fourteenth century, as no safe preceptor of youth. And to assert the authority of the crown, as that which should be final in determining the applications of ecclesiastical property, was also to take a position against which provincial synods, and the papal court, had brought their most powerful engines of destruction. Nor was it less hazardous, at that period, to treat the distinctions which had

CHAP. obtained in the hierarchy, as merely those of
V. jurisdiction, and as altogether of human origin.
----- To proceed thus far, was sufficient to become identified with John de Ganduno, and Marcillus of Padua, names which the reader will remember are inserted in the bulls of the pontiff, as “of “condemned memory.” So extended, however, and so deeply laid, was the fabric of the reigning superstition, that every attack on its outworks must have rebounded on the head of the assailant, if its doctrine of spiritual power was allowed to be unquestioned. This successful fiction, by placing the matters of a future state at the disposal of the priesthood, was the key-stone of the structure. And it should be distinctly remembered, that against this point the greater number of the articles which Wycliffe is accused of holding was plainly directed; and that in his explanations at Lambeth, even according to the showing of his enemies, no one of the propositions relating to it was for a moment relinquished, or in the slightest degree modified.

The clergy of this period are described as believing, that their sentence of excommunication exposed the parties excommunicated to the fires of purgatory, and often to eternal torments. But if such was their faith, their frequent employment of that sentence, to avenge some trivial offence, or to extort some paltry contribution, must be viewed, as imparting a most odious aspect to their general character. The readiness, indeed, with which these censures were resorted to, throughout the middle ages, obliges us to sup-

pose, that the confidence of churchmen in the truth of this scheme, was more apparent than real. CHAP.
V.
—

To doubt this, must be to regard them, as sharing less in the nature of man, than in that of the fiend. On this subject, the religion and the humanity of Wycliffe spoke too loudly to be misunderstood. He saw the Romish polity and doctrine as artfully contrived to render ecclesiastics the representatives of the Almighty; and this, so as to furnish the means of identifying every movement opposed to their will, with whatever is revolting in impiety. It accordingly appears, and from the paper adopted by Walsingham, that to deliver the souls of men from this too successful snare, was the great solicitude of the reformer. With a view to this object, he exposes the inconsistencies, the worldliness, and the cruelty so evident in the usual exercise of that spiritual authority which the clergy had thus assumed. The maxim, "By their fruits ye shall know them," is applied to them no less than to the laity; and to raise the popular mind from its state of entire prostration to the will of its ghostly masters, men are urged to study the principles of their faith, and doing this, to judge for themselves, with respect to every claim of their spiritual shepherds, however sanctioned by precedents or names.

The statement which we have noticed, as relating to the power of qualifying or disqualifying, treats this imposing feature of the established discipline in very general terms; such indeed, as to render it evident, that it was meant by its author to correct the errors associated with the

CHAP. sacrament of orders, as well as those which had
 V.
 ——— become connected with that of penance. By the persons having most to apprehend from such an interpretation of the articles adverted to, they appear to have been so understood. Wycliffe, indeed, never questioned the scriptural origin of priestly ordination, nor the power of the church to excommunicate the unworthy; but the corruptions which had become connected with the exercise of both functions, he condemned aloud. The efficacy of either act, was regulated, in his view, by the character of the parties in whom it should terminate. Hence, the impenitent offender, though absolved by the priest, is viewed, as still liable to his Maker's displeasure; and clerks, boasting of the sanctity which the episcopal consecration was supposed to have conferred, he often presumes to denounce, as hypocrites by profession, children of the fiend, and worse than the men of Sodom. To prove from the scriptures, and from the early fathers, that such were the doctrines of christian antiquity, was to sound the knell of priestcraft.

If the duties of the reformer, as the delegate of his sovereign, would disclose to him enough of the politics of Avignon, to confirm his disaffection to the papacy; the instructions of that power to the English prelates, which, to use his own indignant language, required them to treat him "as men do thieves," was but ill adapted to diminish his aversion. In his comment on these articles of accusation, which he published immediately after his appearance at Lambeth, it is thus he adverts to the pontiff: "Let him not be ashamed to perform the

“ ministry of the church, since he is, or at least
 “ ought to be, the servant of the servants of God.
 “ But a prohibition of reading the sacred scrip-
 “ tures, and a vanity of secular dominion, and a
 “ lusting after worldly appearances, would seem
 “ to partake too much of a disposition toward the
 “ blasphemous advancement of Antichrist, espe-
 “ cially while the truths of a scriptural faith are
 “ reputed tares, and said to be opposed to chris-
 “ tian truth, by certain leaders who arrogate that
 “ we must abide by their decision respecting
 “ every article of faith, notwithstanding they
 “ themselves are plainly ignorant of the faith of
 “ the scriptures. But by such means, there fol-
 “ lows a crowding to the court (of Rome), to pur-
 “ chase a condemnation of the sacred scriptures
 “ as heretical, and thence come dispensations,
 “ contrary to the articles of the christian faith.”
 The work in which he thus speaks, he has de-
 scribed, as “ A sort of Answer to the Bull,”—
 evidently meaning that which the pontiff had
 addressed to the university. In his closing para-
 graph he remarks, “ These conclusions have I
 “ delivered, as a grain of faith, separated from the
 “ chaff by which the ungrateful tares are set on
 “ fire. These, opposed to the scriptures of truth,
 “ like the crimson blossom of foul revenge, pro-
 “ vide sustenance for Antichrist. Of this the in-
 “ fallible sign is, that there reigns in the clergy a
 “ luciferian enmity and pride, consisting in the
 “ lust of domination, the wife of which is covetous-
 “ ness of earthly things, breeding together the
 “ children of the fiend, the children of evan-

CHAP. V. “gelical poverty being no more. A judgment
 ———— “of the fruit thus produced, may be formed also
 “from the fact, that many, even of the children
 “of poverty are so degenerate, that either by what
 “they say, or by their silence, they take the part
 “of Lucifer, not being able to stand forth in the
 “cause of evangelical poverty ; or not daring, in
 “consequence of the seed of the man of sin, sown
 “in their hearts, or from a low fear of forfeiting
 “their temporalities.” The statements, however,
 which he had now published, he avows himself
 prepared to defend, “even to death, if by such
 “means he might reform the manners of the
 “church.”

Wycliffe
 assailed by
 an anony-
 mous divine

Wycliffe’s escape from the snare of his adversa-
 ries, and this reiteration of his most obnoxious
 opinions, could hardly fail to provoke every kind
 of attack that might be expected to diminish his
 influence. An anonymous writer, who is de-
 scribed by the reformer, as “a motley theologian,”
 immediately assailed the point of his doctrine
 which impeached the infallibility of the pontiff.
 From Wycliffe’s reply, it appears, that his anta-
 gonist had affirmed the pope to be incapable of
 mortal sin, and that he had declared, as a con-
 sequence, that whatever his holiness should ordain
 must be just. On this statement, it is remarked,
 that if it were correct, the pontiff might exclude
 any book from the canon of holy writ, and might
 introduce any novelty in its place ; that he might
 thus alter the whole bible, and make the very
 scripture heresy, establishing as catholic what is
 opposed to the truth. The reformer then adverts

to the efforts which the pontiff had made to arm ^{CHAP.} the authority of the prelates, the court, and the ^{V.} university against him, because he had ventured to question this assumption, and some others, equally impious. The remaining portion of this tract consists of two parts; the first, containing a farther explanation of certain articles, in the series already objected to him, and to which his answers had been given; the second, including a spirited exhortation addressed to the influential classes of the community, to shake off the thralldom, both secular and spiritual, which a foreign power had so long imposed upon them. The articles cited are the seventh, tenth, and thirteenth, which refer to the power of binding and loosing; and also the sixteenth and eighteenth. The sixteenth relates to the office of the magistrate, with respect to the goods of the church; the eighteenth, to the subjection of an offending pontiff, to the corrective authority of the inferior clergy, and, in extreme cases, to that of the laity. The reader will remember, that the pope's instructions to the archbishop of Canterbury, required him to ascertain the real opinions of Wycliffe, but forbade his proceeding to any definite sentence, until the papal judgment should be known. In the course of this tract, the reformer speaks of the delegates as waiting to receive this decision before proceeding to announce the fate of his conclusions; and he states, for their information, that according to a report which had reached him, his doctrine respecting the goods of the church, and the peccability of the pope, had been denounced as in a

CHAP. special degree heretical. From these articles, he
V.
— proceeds to those which treat of the power of ab-
solution; and presuming that the decision respect-
ing them would be that the pope, and the clergy
generally, may as certainly bind and loose as the
Almighty himself, his indignation becomes impe-
tuous. The abettor of such a tenet, whoever he
may be, is not only described as a blasphemer
and a heretic, but as one whom Christians ought
not in any way, to tolerate—certainly not as their
leader, since his guidance can only serve to con-
duct them in heedlessness to destruction. Secular
lords are therefore called upon to resist the arrogant
claims of the pope, and to do this not merely with
respect to the heresy which he had imposed on
them, in declaring them incompetent to withdraw
their alms from a delinquent church, nor merely
because he had condemned it as heretical to affirm
that his own distribution of the goods of the church
can be only ministerial or subordinate, but because
he had taken from them the liberty of the law of
Christ, and brought in an Egyptian bondage in its
place. It is therefore contended, that no fear of
suffering, no thirst of gain, no love of distinction,
should prevent the soldiers of Christ, as well secu-
lars as clergy, from appearing in defence of the
law of God, even unto blood! Should the lord
pope himself, or even an angel from heaven, pro-
mulate the doctrine which confers a power of
absolving peculiar to the Deity upon a creature, it
is asserted that every member of the christian
commonwealth is bound, at such a crisis, to exert
his influence “for the saving of the faith.” It is

in the following manner, that he reasons on the bearings of that spiritual authority, which the most distinguished churchmen of the age were concerned to maintain. “ Let it once be admitted, “ that the pope, or one representing him, does “ indeed bind or loose whenever he affects to do “ so, and how shall the world stand? For if, when “ the pontiff pretends to bind all who oppose him “ in his acquisition of temporal things, either “ movable or immovable, with the pains of eternal damnation, such persons assuredly are so bound,—it must follow, as among the easiest of things, for the pope to wrest unto himself all the kingdoms of the world, and to subvert or to destroy every ordinance of Christ. And since, for a less fault than this usurpation of a divine power, Abiathar was deposed by Solomon, Peter was reprov’d to the face by Paul, nay, and many popes have been deposed by emperors and kings,—what should be allowed to prevent the faithful uttering their complaints against this greater injury done to their God? For on the ground of this impious doctrine, it would be easy for the pope to invert all the arrangements of the world; seizing, in connection with the clergy, on the wives, the daughters, and all the possessions of the laity, without opposition, inasmuch, as it is their saying, that even kings may not deprive a churchman of aught, neither complain of his conduct, let him do what he may, while obedience must be instantly rendered to whatever the pope may decree!” So unblushing

CHAP. was the tyranny of the system which Wycliffe
 ——— V. ——— laboured to demolish, and so devoutly was his
 doctrine adjusted, to operate as an axe upon
 the root.¹⁸

¹⁸ Dr. Lingard, (*Hist.* iv. 257,) refers to Walsingham (*Hist.* 206, 207,) as containing the three papers produced by Wycliffe, in explanation of the articles urged against him. It is, however, the first of these only that may be found in Walsingham. Mr. Lewis, who is also referred to as having printed them, has given us the first and second; but from the third, has contented himself with extracts, and an imperfect analysis. Dr. Lingard farther observes, that these papers are without date, but that their contents seem to point out the order in which they succeeded each other, and on this authority has inverted the dates assigned to them by every previous writer. By this means Wycliffe is made to play the hero while danger is remote, and a character less reputable on its nearer approach; and the wonted ingenuity of the historian is employed to make just this impression on his readers. Dr. Lingard has abstained from any notice of the particulars which we are to suppose have warranted that disposition of these documents which he has applied to so serious a purpose. A translation of the first paper has been printed by Fox, and by Mr. Lewis; the second is in the Appendix; and the reader, by comparing them, will perceive, that there is not the remotest ground for regarding that which I have considered the second, as being really the first; on the contrary, its distinct reference to the contents of the previous document is decisive of its own sub-

sequent date. Compare article the sixth of the latter, with the sixth, sixteenth, and seventeenth of the former.

With respect to the third production, the only clause which may seem for a moment to unsettle the date assigned to it, is that in which the reformer speaks of the delegates as waiting the permission of the pontiff before delivering their judgment upon his conclusions. But even this circumstance, as explained in the text, (p. 403.) is among the proofs of its appearance as subsequent to the meeting at Lambeth. According to Dr. Lingard, Wycliffe "celebrated" his escape on that occasion "as a triumph;" and if so, the bolder tone of his second paper, the angry attack of his anonymous opponent, and his still more indignant reply, follow each other in natural order. On the other hand, an inversion of these dates, unsupported, as far as I can perceive, by the least shade of evidence, is attended by numerous difficulties, which it is hardly necessary to expose. It may be remarked, also, that the substance of the paper described by Dr. Lingard as "inflammatory," and as subsequently softened down by the fears of its author, was soon republished in the twenty-second chapter of the reformer's work on "Clerks - Possessioners;" and is still more vigorously given in the nineteenth chapter of his popular treatise, called, "The Great Sentence of the Curse Expounded."—MSS. C. C. C. Cambridge.

NOTES.

NOTE A.

“THE order of admitting none to any ecclesiastical function, except by an election of all the faithful in a general assembly, was inviolably observed, and so continued for about two hundred years; the ministers of the church and the poor subsisting all that while out of a common stock.” (Father Paul on Benefices, c. iii. 3.) “No bishop that was unknown was admitted; nor did the bishop ever ordain any, but such as were approved, or, indeed, proposed by the people, whose concurrence was thought so necessary, that the pope St. Leo proves at large the invalidity of a bishop’s ordination without it. In this all the fathers of the church in those times agree. And Constance being chosen bishop of Milan by the clergy, St. Gregory thought he could not be consecrated without the consent of the inhabitants, who being at that time retired to Genoa, to avoid the ravages of the barbarous nations, a message was first sent to them, at his instance, to know their pleasure; a thing which may justly be recommended to the observation of this age, in which we are taught that elections, wherein the people should pretend to have a share, would be unlawful and invalid. So inverted are customs, as to make good and evil change their names,—calling that lawful which was formerly reputed detestable and impious; and that unjust, which had then the

reputation of sanctity!" (Ibid. c. vii.) "Charlemagne likewise restored to the cities the liberty of electing their own bishops; and ordered that bishops should ordain such priests as should be presented to them by their parishioners." (Ibid. c. xv.) Our reformers were not a little encouraged by such facts, in their struggle to release the power of the laity from its subjection to that of the papal priesthood.

NOTE B.

MR. TURNER, in noticing the crusades against the Albigenses, (Hist. v. 129,) observes that, "a large portion of the warlike missionaries were Englishmen." To ascertain the correctness of this statement, the reader is referred to the first volume of the History of England (443), where the disgrace of that memorable enterprise is divided between England, France, and the Papal power—the larger portion being attributed to the latter. I am sorry to question a single statement from the pen of an author whose general accuracy is so truly commendable. No living writer would seem to have bestowed more attention on the best authorities relating to this painful section of modern history than Sismondi; and in his narrative, the English are also described as forming a part of the crusading army, and as exulting in the capture of Beziers, as a miracle wrought by Heaven in support of the catholic cause. But the authority in both these instances is Matthew Paris, (Hist. 332, &c.); and, as far as I can ascertain, he is alone among contemporary writers in making this assertion with respect to England. It should also be remembered, that in common with all our native historians, the Monk of St. Alban's was but very partially informed on these subjects; and that such was his feeling with respect to the Albigenses, that he would almost have considered it a foul spot on the fair fame of his country, had it not been allowed to share in the effort to crush them. Every thing in Sismondi's narrative, with the exception of the solitary passage

adverted to, is opposed to the notion of many Englishmen being present in the crusading army, at any period of its operations. It is this historian who expressly affirms, that the first army was raised almost entirely from the immediate neighbourhood of Toulouse,—and those were the men who captured Beziers. In his farther descriptions of the crusaders, they are sometimes described as from the fiefs of Montfort, near Paris; sometimes as a homeless multitude, inflamed with fanaticism, or rather with the lust of slaughter and depredation: but more commonly the atrocities narrated are said to be done by “Montfort and his Frenchmen.” And the correctness of this general description is supported by the fact that in an assembly convened by Montfort at Pamiers, in 1212, five years after the raising of the first crusade, it was enacted that the widows and heiresses within his new territories should marry none but Frenchmen during the next ten years, (Sismondi, c. ii.) The period of Montfort’s activity, also, was the last seven years in the reign of John, and the two first in that of Henry the third,—an interval in which the domestic troubles of England were too great to admit of any expenditure of its strength on an object so remote as the war of Toulouse. It is true, the count of Toulouse held some cautionary lands of the king of England. The ambassadors of the English monarch, on that account, pleaded the cause of that injured nobleman before the pontiff; and apart from this circumstance, something more would perhaps have been required by Honorius, than that his vassal of England should abstain from invading the soil of France, while the soldiers of that nation were called to the pious work of destroying heretics. Perhaps the nearest approach of the English to a participation in the same honour, was in the presence of a body of men in the first crusading army, from Agenois, who were certainly subjects of the king of England, and were commanded by the archbishop of Bourdeaux, (ibid. c. i.) Opposed to the assertion of Matthew Paris, is this series of particulars, and also the silence of other writers who were certainly far better informed on these points. But if Englishmen were indeed before the walls of Beziers,—and thus much, which is all that Matthew

Paris affirms, is neither impossible nor improbable,—it is certain they were not there under authority from this kingdom. That Montfort's influence, as earl of Leicester, drew many to his standard, even from his own fiefs, is improbable, as before stated, on account of the distance of the seat of warfare, and the limited nature of feudal service. The counts of Nevers and Toulouse abandoned their enterprise at the expiration of the feudal period of forty days, and the duke of Burgundy and his followers did the same. (Ibid.)

NOTE C.

WE have the best authority for concluding, that had the papal missionaries failed to reach the shores of Saxon Britain, the faith of the gospel would have become known at no distant period to our ancestors, and that in a less objectionable form, than as imported from Rome. The civil or religious benefits resulting from the Christianity known in England, previous to the conquest, may be viewed as considerable; but it is an important fact, and one by no means sufficiently attended to, that in the year 664, when the gospel was professed by nearly the whole island, it had been introduced and maintained in at least two-thirds of it by Scottish missionaries,—men who knew how to spurn the growing usurpations of the pontiffs, resting their own claims to a religious office on higher authority. The states of the Octarchy had their separate apostles; these, belonging to different nations, each introduced among his converts the forms which had been sanctified by the practice of his own communion. The people of Kent, Wessex, and East-Anglia, renounced their ancient superstitions under the direction of teachers from Rome or Gaul. The East-Saxons, the Mercians, and the tribes of Bernicia, and Deiri, whose territories stretched from the mouth of the Thames and of the Severn, to the Friths of Edinburgh, were all led to their profession of the gospel by Scottish preachers, or by such natives as were indebted to them for education. Among the diversity of customs

thus introduced, the time for the celebration of Easter, and the fashion of dressing the hair to be observed by ecclesiastical persons, are particularly mentioned as forming subjects of dispute. The Roman computation required the paschal solemnities to commence on the first Sunday after the fourteenth, and before the twenty-second of the equinoctial lunation. But the Britons and Scots had been taught to commence their Easter services on the first Sunday after the thirteenth, and before the twenty-first day of the same moon. Hence, when the Sabbath occurred on the thirteenth, their rejoicings began a week earlier than those of such as were in communion with Rome.

It was in the year 664, that Oswy, who had recently united the powerful kingdom of Mercia to that of Northumbria, invited the opposing parties to meet him at Whitby. The leading disputants were patiently heard; but it was asserted, that the keys of Paradise were entrusted to St. Peter alone, and this politic tenet is said to have influenced the royal mind in favour of the papal advocates.

The decision of Oswy became an act for uniformity, and led to the ultimate expulsion of the Scottish teachers from the Anglo-Saxon territories. They saw that to conform with this enactment, would be to concede to the churches planted by the Romanists, a supremacy, on account of their connexion with the papacy, unjust in itself, and dangerous to the Christian cause. The thing required might be trivial, but the principle of subjection was not to be admitted. The scheme of usurpation thus established, had been long devised; but the sanctity and talent of Aidan, and of Finan, his successor, were the safeguard of liberty to their clergy and converts. Colman, who was next raised to the see of Landisfarne, inherited the virtue without the ability of his predecessors, and the opportunity thus presented for encroachment was eagerly improved. It is also important to observe, respecting these injured men, these patriarchs in the cause of protestant nonconformity, that to the latest period of their influence, their piety and zeal, and learning, were all such as to extort the plaudits even

of their enemies—a fact which may in some measure account for their being abandoned by a prince, who, while giving law to the Octarchy, could reconcile the conduct of the assassin with the hope of the gospel.¹

The above statements are supported by indisputable evidence; and if correct, the question as to the extent of Anglo-Saxon obligations to papal missionaries, is not to be determined by a comparison between the paganism of the Saxon hordes on the shores of the Baltic, and the faith embraced by their descendants in England, in the days of Theodore or Bede; but between the probable influence of the faith published by the preachers above adverted to, and of that promulgated by the more effective instruments of the papal authority. For it will hardly be supposed, that the men whose zeal extended the tidings of salvation from the northern extremities of Saxon Britain to the borders of her southern provinces, were of a character to have halted even there, had not the ground been already occupied by foreign agents. If the reader will bear in mind the concession, as to the character of these instructors, which has been cited from their enemies, and connect with it what is known of the state of religion among our Saxon fathers, he will scarcely be at loss to determine whether the services rendered by St. Gregory and his monks, were such as to warrant all the boasting which is sometimes obtruded upon us. The spirit which dictated the rejecting of the claims of St. Augustine on the part of the Britons, was that which suggested the same line of conduct to the Scottish missionaries in the debates at Whitby,—the point virtually urged in both instances, and that which in both instances was indignantly spurned, being the doctrine of the pope's supremacy.

¹ Bede, Hist. iii. 14, 17, 21, 22, 25, Whitaker's Manchester, ii. c. 4, p. 88.
26. Usher's Primord. c. xii. p. 394. Turner's Anglo-Saxons, book iii. c. iv.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

Testamentum Domini Roberti Wyclif quondam Rectoris de Rudby. From the Register of T. Langley, bishop of Durham, fol. 115.

IN Dei nomine, Amen—8 Sep. 1423. Ego Robertus de Wyclif, Rector Ecclesiæ Par. de Rudby, Eboracensis Dioceseos sanæ memoriæ omnes donationes causa mortis per me ante datam presentium factas de revoco ca ceptis certis legatis per me quibusdam personis, &c. in ultimo meo eulogio assignatis, quæ quidem legata sunt inclusa in quodam rotulo sigillo meo signato: et testamentum meum ultimum, &c. condo, &c. in hunc modum. In primis commendo animam meam Deo omnipotenti Beatæ Mariæ et omnibus sanctis corpusque meum depeliendum ubi contigerit me decedere ab hac vita vel ubi executores mei disposerint illud sepeliri. Volo tamen quod corpus meum simplici modo quo honestè possit tradatur sepulturæ. Ac quod omnia et singula debita mea seu debenda ratione ultimi vale mei ipsi Ecclesiæ integre persolvantur. Item volo quod viginti libræ dentur duobus capellanis celebraturis pro animâ meâ animabusque patris mei et matris et omnium benefactorum meorum et pro animabus omnium illorum pro quibus teneor et sum oneratus enotare. Et volo quod Johannes de Midelton sit unus de predictis capellanis, et quod celebret ut predicatur per triennium ubicunque voluerit, capiens pro singulo anno centum solidos de summa viginti librarum predictarum. Et volo quod alius capellanus celebret per annum integrum immediate post decessum meum ubi corpus meum fuerit humatum capiens residuum summæ antedictæ. Item lego ad reparationem quatuor Ecclesiarum, videlicet Rudby, Sancti Rumaldi, Kyrkebyrawynswath et Wyclif cuilibet illarum XL^s. Item lego cuilibet Moniali de Nun Appilton, 11^s. Item lego pro . . . seu ornamentis emendandis infra cancellum Ecclesiæ de Wyclif, XL^s. Item lego XL^s. distribuendos pauperibus infra parochiam de Wyclif. Item lego ad reparationem pontis de Rudby, xx^s. Item lego cuilibet capellanorum stipendiariorum Rectoriæ de Rudby celebranti ad capellas infra parochiam de Rudby, vi^s. viii^d. Item lego cuilibet capellano et cuilibet fratri hospitalis de Kepier vi^s. viii^d. Item lego cuilibet pauperi scolari

sedenti ad skepham infra aulam predicti hospitalis 11^s. Item lego Emmotæ Mylner, Isotæ Sollay et Cristianæ Kendall videlicet cuilibet illarum 6^s. viii^d. Item lego cuilibet ordini Fratrum mendicantium videlicet Allerton, Richemond, et Hertipole 20^s. et Fratribus de Zarme 22^s. viii^d. Et lego cuilibet servienti meo transeunti ad carucam et custodienti averia mea ultra salaria sua 11^s. 14^d. Et residuum vero summæ c librarum de quibus condo testamentum meum ac etiam omnium et singulorum bonorum meorum mobilium et mihi de quibuscunque personis debitorem do et lego executoribus meis ut et ipsi inde provideant faciant et disponant pro salute animæ meæ secundum quod eis videbitur melius expedire. Et ad hoc testamentum meum bene et fideliter perficiendum et implendum ordino et constituo Christopherum de Boynton Henricum Nersfeld Johannem de Midelton capellanum et Thomam Nele executores meos et unicunque illorum 12^s. pro labore suo assigno. Et super visores hujus testamenti ordino et constituo Johannem Langton militem manentem juxta Shirburne in Elvet et Robertum de Eure Com. Dunelm. In cujus rei testimonium huic presenti testamento sigillum meum opposui. His testibus Johanne Runhorne capellano Thoma Tange et Roberto Berehalgh notariis publicis Thoma Morpath et Alano Shirebum capellanis. Data apud Kepier supradict, die et anno Domini supradictis.

No. II.

MS. in Bibl. *Specialis Licentia Domini Regis Edwardi III. pro appropriatione*
 Lam. *Advocationis Ecclesie de Pageham, Aule Cantuariensi in*
 No. 104, fol. *Oxonia.*

EDWARDUS Dei gratia Rex Angliæ, Dominus Hiberniæ et Aquitaniæ, omnibus ad quos præsentem hæ pervenerint, salutem. Sciatís quod de gratia nostra speciali, et ad devotam supplicationem venerabilis Patris Simonis Cant. Archiepiscopi totius Angliæ Primatis, et Apostolicæ sedis Legati pie desiderantis incrementum salubre cleri regni nostri propter multiplicationem doctrinæ salutaris, quæ jam per præsentem epidemiam noscitur plurimum defecisse, Concessimus et licentiam dedimus pro nobis et hæredibus nostris, quantum in nobis est, eidem Archiepiscopo, quod ipse in Universitate Oxon. quandam Aulam sive Domum Aulam Cantuariensem vulgariter et communiter vocitandam, in qua certus erit numerus scolarium tam religiosorum quam secularium artibus scolasticis insistentium et Deo pro nobis et salute Regni nostri specialiter exorantium secundum formam ordinationis inde per eundem Archiepiscopum super hoc faciendæ, suis sumptibus erigere poterit et fundare, et eisdem scolabus in perpetuum assignare, et in eventu quo Domus sive Aula sit fundata, et scolares in ea assignati fuerint, Advocationem Ecclesiæ de

Pageham suæ jurisdictionis immediatæ, quæ est de advocatione sua propria, et de jure suo Archiepiscopali, et quæ de nobis tenetur in capite, ut dicitur, eisdem scolaribus, et successoribus suis dare possit, et etiam assignare, habendum et tenendum præfatis scolaribus et successoribus suis de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam et puram et perpetuam elemosinam in perpetuum; et eisdem scolaribus quod ipsi tam aulam quam advocationem prædictas a præfato Archiepiscopo recipere, et Ecclesiam illam appropriare, et eam sic appropriatam in proprios usus tenere possint sibi et successoribus suis prædictis, pro nobis et salute Regni nostri oraturi juxta ordinationem prædicti Archiepiscopi, de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam et puram et perpetuam elemosinam in perpetuum sicut prædictum est, Tenore præsentium similiter licentiam dedimus specialem, statuto de terris et tenementis ad manum mortuam non ponendis edito non obstante, Nolentes quod prædicti Archiepiscopus vel successores sui aut præfati scolares seu successores sui ratione præmissorum, seu statuti prædicti, aut pro eo quod dicta advocatio de nobis tenetur in capite, sicut prædictum est, per nos vel hæredes nostros Justitiæ Estaetores, Vicecomites, aut alios ballivos seu ministros nostros quoscunque occasionentur, molestentur in aliquo seu graventur. Salvis tamen nobis et hæredibus nostris, ac aliis capitalibus Dominis feodi illius servitiis inde debitis et consuetis. In cujus rei testimonium has literas nostras fieri fecimus patentes. Teste-meipso apud Westmonasterium xx^o. die Octobris anno regni nostri tricesimo quinto.

A D. 1361.

No. III.

Charta Foundationis Aulæ Cantuariensis, et Donationis Manerii de Wodeford Lincoln. Dioceseos dictæ Foundationi.

MS. in
Bibl. Lam.
No. 101, fol.

SAPIENTIA Dei Patris per uterum Beatæ Virginis volens prodire in publicum sicut ætate proficere voluit sic gratiæ et sapientiæ suæ munera paulatim aliis proficiendo secundum processum ætatis suæ magis ac magis realiter ostendebat, ut alii qui ab ejus plenitudine fuerint particulariter sapientiam recepturi prius humiliter addiscerent et proficiendo crescerent in doctrina, posteaque quod sic didicerint aliis salubriter revelarent. Quia igitur per sapientiam sic non absque sudore et laboribus acquisitam reguntur regna et in justitia confoventur, Ecclesia militans germinat et sua diffundit tentoria: Nos Simon permissione Divina Cantuariensis Archiepiscopus totius Angliæ Primas et Apostolicæ sedis Legatus, ad hæc sepius revolventes intima cordis nostri, ac considerantes viros in omni scientia doctos et expertos in epididymis præteritis plurimum defecisse, paucissimosque propter defectum exhibitionis ad præsens insistere studio literarum, de magnificæ Trinitatis gratia, et meritis beati Thomæ martyris patroni nostri firmiter confidentes, de

bonis nobis a Deo collatis Aulam quandam in Universitate Oxon. et nostræ provinciæ de consensu et licentia serenissimi principis Domini Edwardi Regis Angliæ illustris, in loco quem ad hoc nostris sumptibus comparavimus, construximus et fundavimus, quam pro duodenario studentium numero duximus ordinandum. In partem igitur dotis et sustentationis ipsius Collegii octo hospitia conductitia juxta situm loci in quo habitationem hujusmodi studentium assignavimus consistentia, quæ gravibus sumptibus nostris et expensis propterea specialiter adquisivimus per hanc Cartam nostram conferimus et donamus, et etiam assignamus: Maneriumque de Wodeford Lincoln. Dioceseos ad per dilectum Nepotem nostrum Willelmum de Islep spectans cum omnibus suis pertinentiis eidem collegio procuravimus assignari. Datum apud Maghfeld Idus Aprilis Anno Domini 1363, et nostræ Consecrationis xiv.

Instrumentum præcedentis Cartæ.

MS. in
Bibl. Lam.
No. 104, fol.

IN Dei nomine, Amen. Per præsens publicum instrumentum omnibus innotescat, quod Anno ejusdem Domini 1363, secundum computationem Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ, Indictione secunda Pontificis sanctissimi in Christo Patris et Domini Domini Urbani digna Dei providentia Papæ Quinti anno secundo, mensis Februarii die quarto, coram Reverendo in Christo Patre Domino Simone Dei gratia Cant. Archiepiscopo, totius Angliæ Primate, et Apostolicæ sedis Legato, in Camera sua infra Manerium suum apud Cherryng Cant. Dioceseos personaliter constituto, producta fuit, exhibita et lecta quædam carta ipsius patris sigillo mei notarii subscripto satis noto consignata, quam idem Dominus Archiepiscopus asseruit se fecisse, et contenta in eadem rata, grata et firma se habere velle perpetuis temporibus valiturum: Cujus quidem Cartæ tenor de verbo ad verbum sequitur in hæc verba. *Sapientia Dei Patris per uterum Beatæ Virginis volens prodire, &c.* Consecrationis xiv. acta fuerunt hæc anno indictionis Pontificiæ, mense, die et loco prædictis præsentibus venerabili in Christo Patre Domino Willelmo Dei gratia Episcopo Roffensi, Magistro Nicholao de Chaddesden, Legum Doctore Canonico Ecclesiæ Lichfieldensis, Cancellario dicti Domini Archiepiscopi, Willelmo Tankerville Rectore Ecclesiæ de Lawfar London. Johanne Barbo Clerico Roffensis Dioceseos testibus ad præmissum rogatis.

Et Ego Richardus Wodelond de Calceto Clericus Cicestrensis Dioceseos, notarius Apostolica auctoritate publicus, productioni, exhibitioni, et lecturæ Cartæ prædictæ assertioni et ratificationi dicti Domini Archiepiscopi ac omnibus et singulis prout superius scribuntur et recitantur una cum præfatis testibus interfui, eaque omnia et singula sic vidi fieri et audiui veramque copiam sive transcriptum ipsius Cartæ superius descriptæ aliis negotiis occupatus per alium scribi feci, et hic me subscripsi et signum meum apposui præsentibus consuetum.

Willelmi de Islep confirmatio prædictæ Donationis Manerii de Wodeford.

SCIENT præsentis et futuri quod Ego Willelmus de Islep ad instantiam Domini mei Domini Simonis Dei gratia Cant. Archiepiscopi totius Angliæ Primatis et Apostolicæ sedis Legati, dedi, concessi, et hac præsentis carta mea confirmavi Custodi et Clericis Aulæ Collegiæ Cant. per ipsum Dominum meum in Universitate Oxon. noviter fundatæ, Manerium meum quod habeo in Wodeford cum omnibus suis pertinentiis in Comitatu Northampton, habendum et tenendum prædictum Manerium cum omnibus suis terris, pratis, pascuis, pasturis, redditibus, homagiis, servitiis, stagnis, vivariis, aquis molendinis, gardinis, columbariis cum omnibus aliis suis pertinentiis prædictis, Custodi et Clericis et eorum successoribus in perpetuum tenendum de capitalibus Dominis feodi per servitia inde debita, et de Jure consuetæ. In cuius rei testimonium sigillum meum præsentibus apposui, his testibus, venerabili in Christo Patre Domino Willelmo Dei gratia Roffensi Episcopo, Magistro Nicholao de Chaddesden Legum Doctore Cancellario, Domino Johanne Waleys milite, Dominis Thoma de Wolton seneschallo terrarum et Willelmo Islep cruciferario dicti Domini Archiepiscopi et multis aliis. Et ad majorem securitatem præmissorum Ego Willelmus de Islep supradictus præsentem cartam subscriptione et signi appositione Magistri Richardi Wodeland Clerici Notarii auctoritate Apostolica publici ad requisitionem meam specialem feci et obtinui communiri Datum apud Maghefeld quarto die mensis Junii anno Domini millesimo cccclxiii. et anno Regni Regis tertii post conquestum xxxvii.

Et Ego Richardus Wodeland de calceto Clericus Cicestrensis Dioceseos Notarius Apostolica auctoritate publicus dationi, et confirmationi, et concessioni prædictis, et sigilli appositioni cartæ prædictæ una cum suprascriptis testibus, loco, die, mense et anno Domini supradictis, indictione prima Pontificis sanctissimi in Christo Patris et Domini Domini Urbani digna Dei providentia Papæ quinti anno primo, præsens interfui et præfatum Willelmum de Islep dictam cartam perlegere audivi, et ad rogatum dicti Willelmi hic me subscripsi, et signum meum apposui præsentibus consuetum in testimonium præmissorum.

No. IV.

Instrumentum Collationis Johannis de Wyclyve Guardianati Aulæ Cantuariensis in Universitate Oxoniæ.

SIMON, &c. Dilecto filio Magistro Johanni de Wyclyve salutem. Ad vitæ tuæ et conversationis laudabilis honestatem, literarumque scientiam, quibus personam tuam in artibus magistratum altissimus insignivit, mentis

Historia et Ant. Oxon. p. 184. Ex Registro Islep in Archivis Lambethanis, fol. 306.

nostræ oculos dirigentes, ac de tuis fidelitate, circumspectione, et industria plurimum confidentes, in custodem Aulæ nostræ Cantuar. per nos noviter Oxoniæ fundatæ te præficimus, tibi que curam et administrationem custodiæ hujusmodi incumbentes juxta ordinationem nostram in hac parte committimus per præsentem, reservata nobis receptione juramenti corporalis per te nobis præstandi debiti in hac parte. Dat. apud Maghefeld v^o idus Decemb. anno Domini MCCCLXV. et nostræ XVI.

No. V.

Ecl. Christ.
Cant. Reg.
K. fol. 67.

Verba Ordinationis quoad Custodem Aulæ Cantuar. Domino Archiepiscopo nominandum.

———— et debet ipse præfici sicut cæteri monachi officarii dictæ Ecclesiæ per Dominum Archiepiscopum præficiendi viz. Prior et Capitulum eligent de toto Capitulo tres personas ydoneas et meliores in religione et scientia ad dictam Curam, et eos in scriptura communi Domino Archiepiscopo nominabunt quorum unum ex illis sic nominatis quem voluerit Archiepiscopus præficiet in Custodem, Curam et Administrationem tam spiritualium quam temporalium ad ipsam Aulam pertinentium sibi plenius committendo.

No. VI.

Nominatio Custodis Aulæ Cant. noviter fundatæ in Universitate Oxon. per Reverendum Patrem Dominum Simonem de Islep Archiepiscopum Cantuariensem.

REVERENDO in Christo Patri ac Domino, Domino Simoni Dei gratia Cant. Archiepiscopo totius Angliæ Primate, et Apostolicæ sedis Legato, Vestri humiles et devoti Prior et Capitulum Ecclesiæ Christi Cant. obedientiam, reverentiam et honorem. Ad curam et officium Custodis Aulæ Cantuar. in Universit. Oxon. per vos noviter fundatæ Fratres Henricum de Wodhulle sacre pagine Doctorem, Johannem de Redyngate et Willielmum Rychemond nostros confratres et commonachos Vobis juxta formam et effectum Ordinationis vestræ factæ in hac parte, Tenore presentium nominamus. Supplicantes quatinus unem ex illis tribus sic nominatis quem volueritis in Custodem dictæ Aulæ præficere, et eidem curam et administrationem tam spiritualium quam temporalium ad ipsam Aulam pertinentium committere dignetur vestra paternitas reverenda, quam ad Ecclesiæ suæ Regimen conservet in prosperis Trinitas indivisa. Dat. sub sigillo nostro communi in Domo nostra Capitulari Cant. XIII die Martii anno Domini millesimo ccc^{mo}. LXII^{do}.

No. VII.

JOHANNES de Radyngate Monachus Cant. factus est Custos Anlæ Cant. Oxon. a Simone Langham Archiepiscopo Cant. Anno 1367º 11 Cal. Apr. Mandatum tamen revocatum est ab Archº x Cal. Maii sequentis et Henricus de Wodhall Monachus Cant. factus Custos directo ad Joannem Wycliff et cæteros scolares Anlæ Cant. mandato ut obedirent ei.

Regist.
Langham.
fol. 98.

No. VIII.

Mandatum Apostolicum ad exequendam sententiam Cardinaliis Andruyni contra Wiclyffum.

MS. in.
Bibl. Lam.
No. 104, fol.

URBANUS Episcopus servus servorum Dei, venerabili fratri Episcopo Londoniensi, et dilectis filiis Abbati Monasterii sancti Albani, Lincoln. Dioceseos, ac Archidiacono Oxon. in Ecclesia Lincoln. Salutem et Apostolicam benedictionem. Petitio dilectorum filiorum Prioris et Capituli Cant. Ecclesiæ ordinis Sancti Benedicti nobis exhibitæ continebat quod licet Collegium Anla Cant. nuncupatum scholarum Universitatis Oxon. Lincoln. Dioces. in quo quidem Collegio nonnulli Clerici et scolares esse consueverant, per unum ex Monachis dictæ Ecclesiæ qui Custos dicti Collegii esse tres alios Monachos dictæ Ecclesiæ secum habere debet, prout in ipsius Collegii fundatione extitit Canonice ordinatum, regi debent: Tamen dilecti filii Johannes de Wycliff, Willelmus Selbi, Willelmus Middleworth, Richardus Bengier, Clerici Eboracensis, Saesburiensis et Oxon. Dioceseos false asserentes dictum Collegium per Clericos seculares regi debere, dictumque Johannem fore Custodem Collegii supradicti, ac Henricum de Wodehall Monachum dictæ Cant. Ecclesiæ ac Custodem dicti Collegii, ac nonnullos Monachos dictæ Ecclesiæ cum præfato Henrico in dicto Collegio commorantes de ipso Collegio excluserunt, ipsosque Collegio ipsis ac bonis inibi existentibus in quorum possessione iidem Henricus et alii Monachi existebant, spoliarunt, et nonnulla alia in ipsorum Monachorum præjudicium acceptarunt, nec non omnia bona dicti Collegii occuparunt, propter quod dilectus filius noster Simon t. t. sancti Sixti Presbyter Cardinalis tunc Archiepiscopus Cant. videns et prospiciens hujusmodi bona dicti Collegii per dictum Johannem et alios Clericos supradictos qui ipsius Johannis consortes erant dissipari, fructus parochialis Ecclesiæ de Pageham Cicestrens. Dioc. sub Jurisdictione Archiep. Cant. pro tempore existentis, consistentis sequestrari fecit, ortaque propterea inter Johannem de Wycliff et ejus consortes ex una parte et dictum Cardinalem super præmissis et eorum occasione ex altera, materia quæstionis. Nos tamen hujusmodi cum partes ipsæ in Romana Curia sufficienter præsentis existent, bonæ memoriæ Andruyno

t. t. sancti Marcelli presbytero Cardinali ad earum partium instantiam audiendam commisimus, et sine debito terminandam. Et quod idem Andruynus Cardinalis prout ei melius et utilius pro statu dicti Collegii videretur expedire posset a dicto Collegio Clericos seculares amovere, vel si ei utilius videretur pro Collegio supradicto religiosos supradictos ab ipso Collegio auctoritate prædicta amovere, ita quod unicum et solum Collegium regularium vel secularium remaneret, cum potestate etiam in dicta causa simpliciter, et de plano, ac sine strepitu et figura iudicii procedendi. Coram quo Magistris Richardo Bangero procuratore Johannis et ejus consortium prædictorum, ac Alberto de Mediolano per Magistrum Rogerum de Treton, procuratorem dictorum Simonis Cardinalis, nec non Prioris et Capituli prædictorum. Qui quidem Prior et Capitulum pro interesse suo ad causam hujusmodi veniebant, substituto donec eum revocaret prout eum ad hoc ab ipsis Simone Cardinale ac Priore et Capitulo sufficiens mandatum habebat in iudicio comparentibus tandem postquam inter partes ipsas coram eodem Cardinali ad nonnullos actus in causa hujusmodi processum fuerat, præfatus Richardus quandam petitionem summariam pro parte sua exhibuit in causa supradicta. Postmodum vero nos eidem Andruyno Card. commisimus ut in causa hujusmodi sola facti veritate inspecta procedere, etiam terminis secundum stilum palatii Apostolici servari consuetis non servatis, postmodum vero præfatus Rogerus coram eodem Andruyno Card. in iudicio comparens nonnullas positiones et articulos quandam petitionem summariam in eorum fine continentes pro parte sua tradidit in causa supradicta, ac deinde cum generales vacationes in dicta Curia de mandato nostro inditæ fuissent. Nos eidem Andruyno Cardinali commisimus ut in causa hujusmodi procedere et partes ipsas per suas literas portis Ecclesiæ Viterbiensis affigendas citare posset quociens opus esset, non obstantibus vacationibus supradictis. Idemque Andruynus Cardinalis ad ipsius Rogeri instantiam præfatum Johannem Wycliff et ejus consortes, cum dictus Richardus procurator in dicta curia diligenter perquisitus reperiri non posset per suas certi tenoris literas portis dictæ Ecclesiæ Viterbiensis affixas ad producendum et ad produci videndum omnia jura et munimenta quibus partes ipsæ vellent in causa hujusmodi uti, citari fecit ad certum preëmptorium terminum competentem in quo præfatus Rogerus coram eodem Andruyno Cardinali in iudicio comparens prædictorum citatorum non comparentium contumaciam actitavit et in ejus contumaciam nonnullas literas autenticas instrumenta publica et alia jura et munimenta quibus pro parte sua in hujusmodi causa voluit uti produxit, idemque Andruynus Cardinalis ad ipsius Rogeri instantiam prædictum Richardum tunc in prædicta Curia repertum ad dicendum contra eadem producta quidquid vellet per portarium suum juratum citari fecit ad certum preëmptorium terminum competentem, in quo præfatus Rogerus coram eodem Andruyno Cardinali in iudicio comparens prædicti Ricardi non comparentis contumaciam accentuavit, præfatusque Andruynus Cardinalis ad dicti Rogeri instantiam prædictum Ricardum ad concludendum et concludi videndum in causa hujusmodi vel dicendum causam rationali-

lem quare in ea concludi non deberet, per portorium suum juratum citari fecit ad certum terminum peremptorium competentem, in quo Magistro Johanne Cheyne substituto de novo per dictum Rogerum donec eum revocaret, prout ad hoc a præfatis Dominis suis sufficiens mandatum habebat coram eodem Andruyno Cardinali in judicio, comparente, et dicti Ricardi non comparentis contumaciam acitante, et in ejus contumaciam in hujusmodi causa concludi petente, prædictus Andruynus Cardinalis reputans eundem Richardum quoad hoc, prout erat merito contumaciæ in ejus contumaciam cum dicto Johanne Cheyne in hujusmodi causa concludente, conclusit et habuit pro concluso. Sub-sequenter vero præfatus Andruynus Cardinalis prædictos Johannem de Wyelyff et ejus consortes, cum dictus Richardus procurator latitaret et diligenter perquisitus in præfata Curia reperiri non posset, ad suam in causa hujusmodi diffinitivam sententiam audiendam per suas certi tenoris literas portis dictæ Ecclesiæ Viterbiensis affixas citari fecit, ad competentem peremptorium certam diem, in quo dicto Rogero coram eodem Andruyno Cardinali in judicio comparente, et dictorum citatorum non comparentium contumaciam accusante, et in eorum contumaciam sententiam ipsam ferri petente, memoratus Andruynus Cardinalis reputans eosdem citatos quoad actum hujusmodi, prout erant merito contumaces in eorum contumaciam visis et diligenter inspectis omnibus et singulis actibus actitatis habitis et productis in causa hujusmodi coram eo, ipsisque cum diligentia recensitis et examinatis, habito super his consilio cum peritis per suam diffinitivam sententiam ordinavit, pronuntiavit, decrevit et declaravit solos Monachos prædictæ Ecclesiæ Cant. Secularibus exclusis debere in dicto Collegio, Aula [Cantuar.] nuncupato, perpetuo remanere, ac exclusionem et spoliationem contra prædictos Monachos per dictum Johannem de Wyelyff et ejus consortes prædictos attemptatas fuisse, et esse, temerarias, injustas et de facto præsumptas, easque in quantum de facto processerint, revocandas et irritandas fore, et quantum in eo tunc revocavit et irritavit. Et Henricum ac alios Monachos prædictos sicut præmittitur, spoliatos et de facto exclusos ad Collegiam nec non omnia bona mobilia et immobilia prædicta restituendos et reintegrandos fore, ac restituit et reintegravit, nec non fructuum sequestrationem ad utilitatem dictorum Monachorum relaxavit. Et insuper Johanni de Wyelyff et ejus consortibus prædictis super præmissis perpetuum silentium imponendum fore et imposuit prout in instrumento publico inde confecto dilecti filii nostri Bernardi duodecim Apostolorum Presbyteri Cardinalis, cui nos præfato Andruyno Cardinali antequam instrumentum super hujusmodi sententiam confectum sigillasset vita functo, commisimus ut instrumentum sigillaret, sigillo immunito plenius dicitur contineri. Nos itaque dictorum Prioris et Capitoli supplicationibus inclinatis hujusmodi diffinitivam sententiam utpote proinde latam, ratam habentes et gratam, eamque autoritate Apostolica confirmantes discretioni vestræ per Apostolica scripta mandamus, quatenus vos vel duo aut unus vestrum per vos vel alium seu alios sententiam ipsam executioni debite demandantes, eamque ubi et quando expedere videritis, auctoritate nostra solempniter publicantes Henricum et alios monachos

prædictos ad dictum Collegium, Aula [Cant.] nuncupatum, nec non ejus bona mobilia et immobilia supradicta, amotis exinde dictis Johanne de Wycliff et ejus consortibus prædictis, auctoritate nostra restitatis, et reintegretis, ac restitutos et reintegratos juxta illius exigentiam defendatis Contradictores per Censuram Ecclesiasticam appellatione postposita compescendo. Dat. Viterbii v. idus Maii Pontificatus nostri anno octavo.

No. IX.

MS. in
Bibl. Lam.
No. 104, fol.

*Regia Pardonatio omnium Foris facturarum Aulae Cantuarien.
et eidem pertinentium, et Confirmatio Papalis Sententiæ De-
privationis Wicliffe.*

EDWARDUS Dei gratia Rex Angliæ et Franciæ et Dominus Hiberniæ : Omnibus ad quos præsentis literæ pervenerint salutem. Sciatis quod cum nuper ut accepimus de gratia nostra speciali et ad devotam supplicationem Simonis tunc Archiepiscopi Cant. qui de Islep cognominatus extiterat pie desiderantis incrementum salubre Cleri nostri propter multiplicationem doctrinæ salutaris per literas nostras patentes sub magno sigillo nostro concesserimus et licentiam dederimus pro nobis et hæredibus nostris quantum in nobis erat eidem Archiepiscopo quod ipse in Universitate Oxon. quandam Aulam sive Domum Aulam Cant. vulgariter et communiter vocitandam, in qua certus foret numerus scolarium tam Religiosorum quam Secularium actibus scolasticis insistentium, et Deo pro nobis et salute Regni nostri specialiter exorantium, secundum ordinationis formam inde per eundem Archiepiscopum super hoc faciendæ, suis sumptibus erigere possit et fundare, et eisdem scolaribus in perpetuum assignare, et in eventu quo Domus sive Aula sic fundata et scolares in ea assignati forent, advocacionem Ecclesiæ de Pagham Jurisdictionis ipsius Archiepiscopi immediatæ, quæ quidem Ecclesia de advocacione propria ejusdem Archiepiscopi, ut de jure suo Archiepiscopali extiterat, et quæ quidem Advocatio de nobis tenebatur in capite, ut dicebatur, eisdem scolaribus dare posse et etiam assignare habendum et tenendum præfatis scolaribus et successoribus suis de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam puram et perpetuam elemosinam in perpetuum, et eisdem scolaribus quod ipsi tam Aulam quam advocacionem prædictas a præfato Archiepiscopo recipere, et Ecclesiam illam appropriare, et eam sic appropriatam in proprios usus tenere possent sibi et successoribus suis prædictis pro nobis et salute regni nostri oraturi juxta ordinationem prædicti Archiepiscopi de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam puram et perpetuam elemosinam in perpetuum sicut prædictum est: Dictusque Archiepiscopus postmodum juxta dictam licentiam nostram quandam Aulam Collegiatam sub certo scolarium studentium numero in

Universitate prædicta vocabulo Aulæ Cantuariensis erexerit, et fundaverit, certosque Monachos Ecclesiæ Christi Cant. unum videlicet Monachum Custodem Aulæ ejusdem, cæterosque scolares in eadem una cum certis aliis scolaribus secularibus in Aula prædicta ordinaverit et constituerit, et eis Aulam illam, nec non advocacionem prædictam dederit et assignaverit eisdem Custodi et Scolaribus et successoribus suis perpetuo possidendas, ipsique Custos et Scholares dictas Aulam et advocacionem a præfato Archiepiscopo receperint, ac Ecclesiam prædictam sibi et successoribus suis in proprios usus una cum Aula prædicta in perpetuum habendam appropriaverit, ac deinde *præter licentiam nostram supradictam* amotis omnino per prædictum Archiepiscopum dictis Custode et cæteris Monachis Scolaribus videlicet regularibus ab Aula prædicta, idem Archiepiscopus quendam scolarem Custodem dictæ Aulæ, ac cæteros omnes scolares in eadem scolares duntaxat constituerit eisdem Custodi et Scolaribus secularibus duntaxat in proprios usus perpetuo possidendam dederit et assignaverit, ipsique Custos et Scholares seculares duntaxat Aulam et Ecclesiam prædictam ex tunc continuatis temporibus durante vita præfati Archiepiscopi possederit tam fructus dictæ Ecclesiæ quam alia bona ad Aulam prædictam spectantia usibus suis propriis applicaverit, et demum defuncto dicto Archiepiscopo et Reverendo in Christo Patre Simone t. t. sancti Sixti, Presbytero Cardinali tunc in Archiepiscopum Cant. consecrato idem Archiepiscopus tunc Cardinalis fructus dictæ Ecclesiæ de Pageham sequestrari fecerit, ortaque præterea inter dictos Custodem et Scholares seculares ex parte una et præfatum Cardinalem super præmissis, et eorum occasione ex altera materia contradictionis, appellationeque interposita, et habito inde processu, Romana Curia autoritate Apostolica videlicet felicitis recordationis Domini Urbani Papæ quinti per diffinitivam sententiam de facto ordinatum fuerit ibidem pronuntiaverit, decreverit et declaraverit solos Monachos prædictæ Cantuariensis Ecclesiæ, secularibus exclusis, debere in dicto Collegio Aula nuncupato perpetuo remanere, nec non dictos Monachum Custodem ac alios Monachos Scholares sic de facto ut præmittitur a dicto Collegio ac bonis inibi existentibus in quorum possessione fuerant per amotionem hujusmodi et occupationem dictorum secularium Custodis et Scolarum secularium spoliatos et exclusos ad Collegium illud, nec non ad omnia bona supradicta, et omnia alia bona mobilia et immobilia dicti Collegii per eosdem secularem Custodem et Scholares seculares post amotionem prædictam occupata restituendos et reintegrandos fore, ac jam Dilecti nobis in Christo Prior et Conventus Ecclesiæ Christi Cant. antedictæ virtute dictorum ordinationis, procuracionis, decreti et declarationis auctoritate Apostolica factorum uti præmittitur, quendam, ut asseriter, Commonachum suum ejusdem Ecclesiæ Christi Custodem dicti Collegii Aulæ nuncupati, ac certos alios Commonachos suos dictæ Ecclesiæ Christi scolares in eodem Collegio ordinaverint et constituerint, amotis dictis secularibus ab eodem penitus et exclusis, *contra formam licentiæ nostræ supradictæ*. Nos quanquam dicta advocatio Ecclesiæ de Pageham per aliquem progenitorum nostrorum una cum aliquibus prædiis seu tenementis in dotacionem, funda-

tionem seu alias in augmentationem Archiepiscopatus Cantuariensis, seu Ecclesiæ Christi Cantuar. antedictæ data, concessa seu assignata extiterat, volentes nihilominus ob devotionem sinceram quam ad dictam Ecclesiam Ecclesiæ Christi Cant. et beatum Thomam Martyrem quondam ejusdem Ecclesiæ Archiepiscopum, cujus corpus gloriose cathalogo sanctorum ascriptum quiescit honorabiliter in eadem, securitati tam dictorum Prioris et Conventus quam Commonachorum suorum, quos ipsi Prior et Conventus Custodem dicti Collegii et Scholares in eodem jam, ut præmittitur, ordinarunt, et in futurum ordinaverint, provide de gratia nostra specialiter et pro ducentis marcis quos dicti Prior et Conventus nobis solverunt in hanapcrio nostro perdonavimus omnes transgressiones factas nec non foris facturam si qua dictæ Aulæ cum pertinentiis et advocacionis prædictæ virtute statuti de terris et tenementis ad manum mortuam non ponendis editi vel alias nobis intensa fuerit in hac parte, dictamque sententiam, ordinationem, pronuntiationem, decretum et declarationem auctoritate Apostolica factam, ut prædictum est, et executionem eorundem pro nobis et hæredibus nostris, quantum in nobis est, acceptamus, approbamus, ratificamus, et confirmamus, volentes, et concedentes pro nobis et hæredibus nostris, quantum in nobis est, quod prædicti Custos et cæteri Scholares Regulares dicti Collegii Aulæ Cant. nuncupati Monachi dictæ Ecclesiæ Christi Cant. et eorum successores per prædictos Priorem et Conventum constituti, et per eosdem Priorem et Conventum et eorum successores constituendi, seu alias loco amovendorum substituendi, actibus scolasticis juxta ordinationem ipsorum Prioris et Conventus et successorum suorum religiose insistentes Aulam prædictam, tenementaque in ipsa contenta cum pertinentiis, nec non Ecclesiam prædictam, et advocacionem ejusdem in usus proprios ipsorum Custodis et scoliarum Regularium teneant videlicet dictam Aulam, et prædicta tenementa cum pertinentiis, quæ de nobis in burgagium tenentur, ut dicitur, de nobis et hæredibus nostris, ac aliis Capitalibus Dominis feodi per servitia inde debita et consueta, et decimas Ecclesiam et advocacionem de nobis et hæredibus nostris in liberam puram et perpetuam elemosinam ad orandum specialiter pro salute animæ nostræ et pro animabus progenitorum nostrorum ac hæredum nostrorum in perpetuum sine occasione vel impedimento nostro vel hæredum nostrorum, Justitiæ Estretorum viæ aut aliorum ballivorum, seu ministrorum nostrorum vel hæredum nostrorum quorumcunque statuto vel forisfactura prædictis aut dictis, dotationem, concessionem, seu assignationem advocacionis prædictæ per aliquem progenitorum nostrorum in dotationem, fundationem, vel alias in augmentationem Archiepiscopatus seu Ecclesiæ Christi prædictorum, seu dictam fundationem per præfatum Simonem de Islep quondam Archiepiscopum tam pro studentibus sive scolaribus Regularibus quam Secularibus factæ, ut præmittitur, seu aliquo alio præmissorum non obstantibus. In cujus rei testimonium has literas nostras fieri fecimus patentes. Teste me ipso apud Westm. octavo die Aprilis Anno Regni nostri Angliæ quadragesimo sexto, Regni

A. D. 1372. vero nostri Franciæ tricesimo tertio.

No. X.

*Pro Johanne de Wiclif et aliis de potestatibus ad tractandum
cum Nunciis Papæ.*

Rymeri
Fœdera,
tom. vii. p.
41. An. 48.
Edw. III.
A. D. 1374.

REX Universis ad quorum notitiam præsentis literæ pervenerint, salutem.

Sciatis quod nos de fidelitate et circumspectione venerabilis Patris
Johannis Episcopi Bangoriensis,

Ac fidelium nostrorum

Magistri Johannis de Wiclif sacre Theologiæ Prof.

Magistri Johannis Guteri Decani Segobiensis,

Magistri Simonis de Multon Legum Doctoris,

Willelmi de Burton Militis,

Roberti Bealknap, et

Johannis de Kenyngton,

plenam fiduciam reportantes, ipsos ad partes transmarinas Ambassadors,
Nuncios et Procuratores nostros speciales destinamus;

Dantes eisdem Ambassadoribus, Nunciis et Procuratoribus, sex vel
quinque eorum (quorum præfatum Episcopum unum esse volumus) auctoritatem,
et potestatem, ac mandatum speciale tractandi et benigne ac
caritative consulendi cum Nunciis et Ambassadoribus Domini summi
Pontificis, super certis negotiis, pro quibus præfatos Episcopum et Wil-
helmum, ac fratrem Ughtredum Monachum Dunolmensem, et Magistrum
Johannem de Shepeve ad sedem Apostolicam nuper miseramus;

Et Relationem plenariam super hiis quæ inter eos tractata et consulta
fuerint nobis et concilio nostro faciendi:

Ut ea quæ honorem sanctæ Ecclesiæ et Conservationem Jurium Coronæ
nostræ, et Regni nostri Angliæ, concernere poterunt in ea parte intuitu
Dei et sanctæ sedis Apostolicæ, feliciter expediantur, et debitum capiant
complementum.

In cujus, &c.

Dat. apud London. vicesimo sexto die Julii.

No. XI.

Bulla Gregorii XI. missa Oxoniæ studio.

Walsingh.
Hist. Aug.
p. 201.

GREGORIUS Episcopus servus servorum Dei, dilectis filiis Cancellario et
Universitati studii Oxoniensis, Lincoln. dioc. salutem, et apostolicam
benedictionem. Mirari cogimur et dolere, quod vos propter gratias et
privilegia vestra, studio Oxoniensi ab Apostolica sede concessa, et
propter scientiam scripturarum, in quarum pelago felici remigio (dante
Domino) navigatis, tanquam pugiles et propugnatores orthodoxæ fidei

(sine qua salus animarum non provenit) esse deberetis, lolium inter purum triticum campi gloriosi studii vestri prædicti per quamdam desidiam et ignaviam premittitis pullulare, et quod est perniciosius etiam adolere, nec circa extirpationem hujus lollii (sicut nuper apud nos insonuit) curam aliquam adhibetis, non sine clari nominis obfuscatione, et animarum vestrarum periculo, et contemptu Ecclesiæ Romanæ, et memoratæ fidei detrimento. Et quod nos torquet acerbius, prius de incremento lollii prædicti sentitur in Roma quam in Anglia, ubi tamen extirpationis remedium apponeretur. Multorum siquidem fide dignorum insinuatione admodum dolentium nostris est auribus intimatum, Johannem Wycklef Rectorem Ecclesiæ de Luttleworth Lincolnensis diœc. sacræ paginæ professorem, utinam non magistrum errorum, in illam detestabilem erupisse vecordiam, nonnullas propositiones et conclusiones erroneas et falsas, ac pravitate hæreseos sapientes, quæ statum totius Ecclesiæ, et etiam secularem policiam subvertere et enervare nituntur, quarumque aliquæ, licet quibusdam mutatis terminis, sentire videntur perversas opiniones et doctrinam indoctam damnatæ memoriæ Marsilii de Padua et Johannis de Gandavo, quorumlibet per fœlicis recordationis Johannem Papam XXII. Prædecessorem nostrum reprobatus extitit et damnatus, in regno Angliæ nempe glorioso potentia et copia facultatum, sed gloriose pietate fidei rutilante, sacræ paginæ claritate consueto viros producere, divinarum scripturarum recta scientia illustratos, morum gravitate maturos, devotione conspicuos, et catholicæ fidei defensores, dogmatizare, et publice prædicare, seu potius de virulento claustris sui pectore evomere non veretur, nonnullos Christi fideles earum respersione commaculans, et a fidei præfatæ recta semita in præcipitium perditionis abducens. Quare cum tam lethiferam pestem, cui si ejus non obstetur principiis et ipsa radicitus evellatur sero posset medicina parari quum per contagionem plurimos infecisset, nolimus prout nec velle debemus sub conniventia pertransire. Universitati vestræ per Apostolica scripta in virtute sanctæ obedientiæ, ac sub pœna privationis omnium gratiarum, indulgentiarum, et privilegiorum vobis ac studio vestro a dicta sede concessorum, districte præcipiendo mandamus, quatenus conclusiones et propositiones in bonis operibus et fide male sentientes, licet eas proponentes sub quadam verborum sive terminorum curiosa implicatione nitantur defendere, de cætero non permittatis asserti vel proponi: Dicitumque Johannem autoritate nostra capiat, seu capi faciatis, et ipsum venerabilibus fratribus nostris Archiepiscopo Cantuar. et Episcopo Londoniensi, aut eorum alteri sub fida custodia transmittatis. Contradictores quoque de dicto studio vestræ Jurisdictioni subjectos, si qui forsitan (quod Deus avertat) essent hujusmodi erroribus maculati, si in illis pertinaciter persisterint, ad similem captionem et missionem, aliasque prout ad vos spectat, firmiter et sollicitè procedatis, perinde vestram suppleturi diligentiam, hactenus in præmissis remissam, nostramque et dictæ sedis, præter divinæ retributionis præmium et meritum, gratiam et benevolentiam adepturi. Dat. Romæ apud sanctam Mariam majorem x1. Calendas Junii, Pontificatus nostri anno septimo.

No. XII.

Bulla Papalis missa Archiepiscopo Cantuar. et Episcopo Londoniensi ad monendum Regem et Magnates Angliæ, ne prædicto Johanni Wycklef favcant, vel adhæreant quovismodo. Walsingh.
Hist. Ang.
p. 202.

GREGORIUS servus servorum Dei, venerabilibus fratribus Cantuar. Archiepiscopo et Episcopo Londoniensi salutem. &c. Super periculosis admodum erroribus quarundam detestabilium propositionum et conclusionum ad enervationem totius ecclesiastici status tendentium, scriptas in schedula inclusa præsentibus, quas Johannes Wycklef rector Ecclesiæ de Luttleworth Lincolniensis dioc. dictus Theologiæ Professor, asseritur Luttl-
worth. tam impie quam temere suscitasse, plenius vobis scribimus, per alias nostras patentes literas, quas cum præsentibus destinamus. Volumus igitur et vestræ fraternitati mandamus quatenus clarissimum in Christo, Edwardum regem Angliæ illustrem, et dilectos filios nobiles viros natos dicti Regis, ac dilectam in Christo filiam nobilem mulierem Johannam principissam Aquitanix et Wallix, et alios magnates de Anglia et consiliarios regis per vos et alios magistros et peritos in sacra pagina, non maculatos hujusmodi erroribus, sed in fide sinceros et fervidos studeatis facere, plenarie informari, ac eis ostendi, quanta verecundia devoto regno Angliæ oriatur exinde, et quod non solum sunt ipsæ conclusiones erroneæ in fide, sed si bene advertantur, innunt omnem destruere Politiam. Et requiratis eos strictissime, quod extirpationem tantorum errorum, pro reverentia Dei et Apostolicæ sedis et nostra, ipsorumque merito apud Deum et honorem seculo, tanquam Catholici principes et pugiles dictæ fidei, omni qua poterunt efficacia tribuant auxilium et favorem. Dat Romæ apud sanctam Mariam majorem xi. Cal. Junii, Pontificatus nostri anno septimo.

No. XIII.

Bulla Papalis ad incarcerandum Johannem Wyckliff et eum citandum ad personaliter comparendum coram Papa. Walsingh.
Hist. Aug.
p. 202.

VENERABILIBUS fratribus Archiepiscopo Cantuar. et Episcopo Londoniensi salutem, &c. Nuper per nos non sine gravi cordis turbatione, et plurium fide dignorum relatione, percepto quod Johannes Wicklef rector Ecclesiæ de Luttleworth Lincolniensis dioc. sacræ pagine professor, utinam non magister errorum, in tam detestabilem vesaniam

temere prorupit, quod nonnullas propositiones et conclusiones erroneas ac falsas et male in fide sonantes, quæ statum totius Ecclesiæ subvertere et euervare nituntur, quarumque aliquæ (quibusdam mutatis terminis) imitari videbantur perversas opiniones, et doctrinam inductam damnatæ memoriæ Marsilii de Padua, et Johannis de Gandavo, quorumlibet per felicitis recordationis Johannem Papam XXII. prædecessorem nostrum reprobatus extitit et damnatus, non verebatur in regno Angliæ asserere, dogmatizare, et publice prædicare, illis nonnullos Christi fideles maligne inficiens, ac a fide catholica (sine qua non est salus) faciens deviare. Nos attendentes quod tam perniciosum malum quod in plurimos serpere poterat, eorum animas læthali contagione necando, non debebamus, prout nec debemus sub dissimulatione transire, vobis per alias literas nostras commisimus et mandavimus, ut vos vel alter vestrum de dictarum propositionum et conclusionum assertionem, quarum copiam sub bulla nostra misimus interclusam, vos secrete informantes, si ita esse inveniretis, præfatum Johannem autoritate nostra capi et carceribus mancipari faceretis, eumque sub bona custodia teneretis in vinculis, donec a nobis super hac reciperetis aliud in mandatis, prout in dictis literis plenius continetur. Considerantes utique quod præfatus Johannes hujusmodi captionem et carcerationem forte præsentens, posset (quod absit) perfigere, seu latitationis præsidio dictum nostrum mandatum in gravissimum fidei detrimentum eludere: Nos (ne tam damnabiles propositiones et conclusiones indiscussæ, et earum temerarius assertor impunitus remaneret in detrimentum gravissimum fidei prælibatæ) fraternitati vestræ per Apostolica scripta committimus et mandamus, quatenus vos vel alter vestrum per vos vel alium seu alios, præfatum Johannem, si per vos capi et incarcerari non possit, per edictum publicum proponendum in studio Oxoniæ Lincolnensis diœc. et aliis locis publicis, de quibus fit verisimilis conjectura, quod ad dicti Johannis notitiam pervenire valeat, et de quibus vos expedire videatur, ex parte nostra peremptorie monere et citare curetis, quod infra trium mensium spacium a die citationis hujusmodi in antea computandum, ubicunque tunc nos esse contigerit, comparere ac personaliter coram nobis super propositionibus et conclusionibus hujuscemodi responsurus, ac auditurus et facturus quicquid super eis duxerimus ordinandum, et ordo dictaverit rationis, prædicando in hujusmodi citationis edicto, quod sive idem Johannes in hujusmodi termino comparuerit, sive non comparuerit, nos super præmissis, et contra eum usque ad debitam condemnationem ipsius inclusive procedemus, prout ejus demerita exigent, ac nobis secundum Deum et conservationem fidei videbitur expedire. Volumus autem et præsentium tenore statuimus, quod prædicta citatio sic facta, provide præfatum Johannem aretet, ac si sibi personaliter insinuata et intimata fuisset, constitutione quacunque contraria non obstante. Diem vero citationis, et formam, et quicquid feceritis in prædictis, nobis per vestras literas sigillis munitas harum seriem continentes, fideliter et quam citius poteritis, int. mare curetis. Dat. Romæ apud sanctam Mariam majorem xi. Calendarum Junii, Pontificatus nostri anno septimo.

No. XIV.

Bulla Papalis Archiepiscopo Cantuariensi, &c. ad carceraudum Johannem Wycklef, et recipiendam ejus Confessionem.

Walsingh.
Hist. Ang.
p. 203.

VENERABILIBUS fratribus Archiepiscopo Cantuariensi et Episcopo Londoniensi salutem, &c. Regnum Angliæ gloriosum nempe potentia et abundantia facultatum, sed gloriosius pietate fidei, et sacræ paginæ claritate coruscum, consuevit viros producere divinarum scripturarum recta scientia præditos, maturitate graves, devotione præclaros, et pugiles fidei orthodoxæ, et qui non solum proprios, sed alienos populos documentis instruebant verissimis, et in mandatorum Domini semitam derigebant. Et sicut ex effectu contingentium temporis antiqui colligitur, dicti regni præsules in specula sollicitudinis positi, proprias excubias excrecentes sollicite, non permittebant aliquod oriri erroneum quod posset inficere oves suas, sed si oriretur zizania ex inimici hominis insperione, illam protinus evellebant, crescebat assidue parum triticum in dominicum horreum inferendum. Sed (proh dolor) nunc apparet quod in ipso regno officio vigiles, negligentia vero desides, non circumant civitatem, dum hostes ingrediuntur in eam, animarum thesaurum preciosissimum prædantur. Quorum latentes ingressus, et patentes aggressus prius sentiuntur in Roma intercapedine longa remota, quam eis in Anglia resistatur. Sane plurium fide dignorum significatione admodum dolentur audivimus, quod Johannes Wycklef rector Ecclesiæ de Littleworth Lincolnienensis dioc. sacræ paginæ Professor, utinam non magister errorum, in illam detestabilem vesaniam dicitur temere prorupisse, quod nonnullas propositiones et conclusiones erroneas et falsas in fide male sonantes, quæ statum totius Ecclesiæ subvertere et enervare conantur, quarumque aliquæ, licet aliquibus quibusdam mutatis terminis, sentire videntur perversas opiniones et doctrinam indoctam damnatæ memoriæ Marsilli de Padua, et Johannis de Ganduno, quorumlibet per felicis recordationis Johannem Papam XXII. predecessorem nostrum reprobatus extitit et damnatus, non veretur in præfato regno asserere, dogmatizare, et publice prædicare, nonnullos Christi fideles eis maligne inficiens, ac a fide catholica (sine qua non est salus) faciens deviare, de quibus sic subortis, et non extirpatis, seu saltem eis nulla facta resistantia, quam sciamus, sed transactis seu tolleratis conniventibus oculis tam negligentur transeundo, non immerito deberetis rubore perfundi, reverendari, et in propriis conscientiis remorderi. Quare cum tam perniciosum malum, quod non præcisum seu radicitus extirpatum serpere posset in plurimos in animabus eorum (quod absit) lethali contagione necandos, nolimus (sicut nec debemus) sub dissimulatione transire. Fraternitati vestræ per Apostolica scripta committimus et mandamus, quatenus receptis præsentibus, vos vel alter vestrum de dictarum propositionum et conclusionum assertione, quarum copiam vobis mittimus sub Bulla nostra inclusam, vos secreta informantes, si inveneritis ita esse,

præfatum Johannem faciatis auctoritate nostra capi, et carceribus mancipari, ejusque confessionem super eisdem propositionibus seu conclusionibus recipere studeatis, ac ipsam confessionem, et quæcunque dictus Johannes dixerit seu scripserit, super earundem propositionum et conclusionum inductione ac probatione, et quicquid feceritis in præmissis sub vestris sigillis clausa, et nemini revelata nobis per fidelem nuncium transmissuri, eundemque Johannem sub fideli custodia teneatis in vinculis, donec a nobis super hoc aliud receperitis in mandatis. Contradictores, &c. Invocato, &c. Non obstantibus felicitis recordationis Bonifacii Papæ VIII. Predecessoris nostri constitutionibus, in quibus cavetur ne aliquis extra suam civitatem vel diœc. nisi in certis exceptis casibus, et in illis ultra unam dietam a fine suæ diœc. ad judicium evocetur, seu ne iudices a sede apostolica deputati aliquos ultra unam dietam a fine suæ diœc. evocare præsumant, et de duabus dietis in consilio generali, ac expansionis et aliis privilegiis, constitutionibus, et literis apostolicis Prædicatorum, Minorum, et Hæremitarum sancti Augustini, et sanctæ Mariæ de monte Carmeli, et aliis quibuscunque medicantium, vel aliis ordinibus et locis, aut specialibus personis seu capitulis et conventibus ipsorum generalibus vel specialibus, quorumcunque tenorum existant, necnon statutis et consuetudinibus eorundem ordinum, et locorum contrariis, per quæ effectus præsentium impediri valeat quomodolibet vel differri etiamsi de eis eorumque totis tenoribus ac de verbo ad verbum plena et expressa mentio in nostris literis sit habenda, seu si Johanni prædicto vel quibusvis aliis communiter vel divisim a dicta sede sit indultum, quod personaliter capi, aut quod jus dici, suspendi, vel excommunicari non possint per literas Apostolicas non facientes plenam et expressam, ac de verbo ad verbum de indulto hujusmodi mentionem Dat. Romæ apud S. Mariam majorem XI. Cal. Junii, anno 27.

No. XV.

Walsingh.
Hist. Ang.
p. 204.

Epistola Papæ ad Regem Edwardum III. ad exhibendum sui Favoris et Auxilii Patrocinium Archiepiscopo Cant. et Episcopo Londinensi in Prosecutione Johannis Wicliffe.

CHARISSIMO in Christo Filio Edwardo Regi Angliæ illustri, salutem, &c. Regnum Angliæ quod Altissimus tuæ supposuit potestati, gloriosum nempe potentia et abundantia facultatum, sed gloriosius pietate fidei, et sacræ paginæ claritate cornuscum, consuevit viros producere divinarum scripturarum recta scientia præditos, maturitate graves, devotione ferventes, et catholicæ fidei defensores, qui non solum proprios, sed alienos populos præceptis salutaribus instruebant, dirigebantque in divinatorum semitam mandatorum. Sed nuper cum ingenti cordis amaritudine pluri-

morum fide dignorum significatione percepimus, Johannem de Wiclef
 rectorem Ecclesiæ de Luttleworth Lincoln. diæcesis, sacræ paginæ pro-
 fessorem, ntinam non magistrum errorum, in illam nefandam et abhominabi-
 lem prorupisse dementiam, quod nonnullas propositiones et conclusiones
 plenas erroribus, et manifestam hæresim continentes, quæ statum totius
 Ecclesiæ subvertere et enervare nituntur, quarumque aliquæ, licet qui-
 busdam mutatis terminis, sentire videntur perversas opiniones, et doc-
 trinam indoctam damnatæ memoriæ Marsilii de Padua et Johannis de
 Ganduno, quorumlibet per fœlicis recordationis Johannem Papam XXII.
 prædecessorem nostrum reprobatus extitit et damnatus, in dicto regno
 dogmatizare et publice prædicare, seu potius de virulento claustro sui
 pectoris evomere non veretur, nonnullos Christi fideles earum respiratione
 commaculans, et a præfatæ fidei recta semita in præcipitium perditionis
 abducens. Nos itaque tantum malum quod non præscisum seu radicisum
 extirpatum serpere posset in plurimos, in animabus eorum (quod absit)
 læthali contagione necandos, nolentes prout nec velle sine nostræ morsu
 conscientiæ possumus, conniventibus oculis, pertransire, venerabilibus
 fratribus nostris Archiepiscopo Cantuariensi, et Episcopo Londinensi per
 litteras nostras commisimus et mandavimus, ut ipsi vel alter eorum,
 receptis per eos dictis nostris literis, de dictarum propositionum et con-
 clusionum assertionem, quarum copiam eis sub bulla nostra misimus inter-
 clusam, se informantes (si invenirent ita esse) facerent præfatum Johannem
 auctoritate nostra capi et carceribus mancipari, ejus confessionem super
 eisdem propositionibus seu conclusionibus recipere studerent, ac ipsam
 confessionem et quæcunque dictus Johannes dixerit vel scripserit super
 eandem propositionum et conclusionum inductionem et probationem, nobis
 per fidum nuncium transmittere non postponant. Cum itaque dicti
 Archiepiscopus et Episcopus in prosecutione hujus negotii noscantur
 favore et auxilio tuæ Celsitudinis indigere, Majestatem tuam quam et
 tui Progenitores incliti catholicæ fidei, cujus in hac parte res agitur,
 semper consueverunt esse præcipui zelatores, requirimus et deprecamur
 attente quatenus ob reverentiam Dei, dictæ fidei, et Apostolicæ sedis, et
 nostrum intuitum digneris præfatis Archiepiscopo et Episcopo, et aliis
 qui hujusmodi negotium persequentur, in ipsa prosecutione tui Favoris et
 Auxilii Patrocinium exhibere provide, præter humanæ laudis præconium,
 divinæ retributionis præmium, nostram et dictæ sedis adepturus benevo-
 lentiam ampliorem. Datæ Romæ apud Sanctam Mariam majorem x1.
 Cal. Junii, anno 7.

No. XVI.

Inter MSS. Seldeni Archi. B. 10.

Ista est Protestatio Reverendi Doctoris una cum ejus Conclusionibus quæ ab eo in subscripta forma sunt posite, quæ in consimilibus materiis, et dissimilibus formis sunt et fuerunt reportate et ad Curiam Romanam transmissæ, et sic in multis minus bene impositæ.

^a Sic pro halitus.

PROTESTOR publice ut sepe alias quod propono et volo esse ex integro Christianus, et quamdiu manserit in me ^aalitus, profitens verbo et opere legem Christi. Quod si ex ignorantia vel quacunque alia causa in isto defecero, nunc prout extunc idem revoco et execro, submittens me humiliter correctioni sancte Matris Ecclesie.

1. *Totum genus humanum concurrentium citra Christum non habet potestatem simplicem ordinandi ut Petrus et omne genus suum dominetur in perpetuum politice supra mundum.* Istud concedo ex fide Scripture; cum oportet omnem civilitatem cessare ante finale iudicium, cum prima ad Corinth, xv. Apostolus loquens de die Iudicii ita scribit, *Demum finis, cum tradiderit regnum Domino et Patri, cum evacuaverit omnem principatum et virtutem.* Qui ergo credit carnis resurrectionem credit istum articulum, cum amplius non est exactio vel conversatio secularis. Nemo ergo habet potestatem ordinandi quicquid contra decretum Domini in hac parte.

2. *Deus non potest dare homini pro se et heredibus suis in perpetuum civile dominium.* Pro isto suppono quod in perpetuum sumatur proprie, et famose utatur more Ecclesie orantis ut Trinitati sit *Gloria nunc et in perpetuum.* Suppono secundo quod civile dominium intelligatur formaliter pro illo quo quis civiliter dominetur. Et tertio quod sit locutio de Dei potestate ordinata, et tunc consequitur ex priori. Loquendo autem de Domini potentia absoluta, videtur multis probabile quod Deus non potest continuare eternaliter viationem sponse sue, eo quod tunc fraudaret eam a præmio, aut corpori diaboli injuste differret dare penam quam meruit.

3. *Carte humanitus adinvente de hereditate perpetua sunt impossibiles.* Ista conclusio fuit lateraliter dicta uni Doctori magnificanti cartas hominum, scriptura professionis Christiane postposita, melius, inquam, foret defensione et expositioni scripture attendere, cum multe carte hujusmodi sint impossibiles. Concedo ergo conclusionem, cum multe carte affirmant de multis exhereditatis et mortuis intestate, quod dantur eis pro se et heredibus in perpetuum certa dominia. Quod cum obviat ordinationi Divine non oportet canonizare cartas singulas scripturam fidei contempnendo.

4. *Quilibet existens in gratia gratum faciente finaliter nedum habet jus ad rem, sed pro suo tempore jus in ^b rem super omnia bona Dei.* Probatum ex fide Scripture satis famose Mat. xxiv. *Super omnia bona sua constituet*

^b Sic MSS. pro re.

eum. Juncto illo Apostoli ad Rom. viii. *Deus proprio filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum, quomodo non cum ipso omnia nobis donavit? Tres ergo prime conclusiones imprimunt mundialibus fidem Christi, ne submergantur in pelago seculi transeuntis cum concupiscentia ejus: Et quarta allicit hominem ad amorem Domini qui dilexit nos ad tot veras divitias.*

5. *Homo potest solum ministratorie dare tam naturali filio quam filio imitationis temporale dominium et eternum implicitum.* Probatur per ^cidem ^e Sic MS. Luc. vi. *Mensuram bonam et confertam et coagitatam et superfluentem* ^{pro illud.} *dabunt in sinum vestrum.* Et quod solum ministratorie ex hoc probatur, quod non licet pure homini dare aliquid nisi tanquam ministro Dei, juxta illud Apostoli prima ad Corinth. iv^o. *Sic nos existimet homo ut ministros Christi.* Unde Christus fuit verus minister ecclesie, dicente Apostolo ad Rom. xv. *Dico enim Jesum Christum ministrum fuisse.* Non ergo erubescat ejus vicarius fungi ministerio ecclesie, cum sit, vel esse debet, *servus servorum Domini.* Nam determinatio a modo legendi sacre Scripture, et fastus secularis domini, cum pruriente stilo seculari, videtur nimis disponere ad blasphemiam extollentiam Antichristi; specialiter si veritates fidei Scripture reputentur lollium, fidei Christiane contrarium ab illis capitaneis qui presumunt quod decreto eorum in omni materia fidei oportet stare, quameunque ignari fuerint fidei scripturarum. Sic enim posset esse concursus ad Curiam ad emendum dampnationem Scripture sacre tanquam heretice et dispensationem contra articulos fidei Christiane.

6. *Si Deus est, Domini temporales possunt legitime ac meritorie auferre bona fortune ab ecclesia delinquente.* Pro isto suppono quod loquamur de posse, ut loquitur Scriptura rectissima et summe autentica, Mat. iii. *Potens est Deus de lapidibus istis suscitare filios Abrahæ, &c.* Concedo ergo Conclusionem tanquam correlariam primo articulo fidei. Nam si Deus est, ipse est omnipotens; et si sic, ipse potest dare dominis secularibus hujusmodi potestatem: Et per consequens ipsi possunt meritorie ac legitime sic uti hujusmodi potestate. Sed ne Conclusio sit ex remotione impertinens, ostendi quod domini temporales habent potestatem [^d auferendi] suas elemosinas collatas ecclesie, ipsa illis elemosinis abundante: Et quod talis ablatio foret in casu spirituale opus misericordie, ^d abest in MS. salvans animam a gehenna, et impetrans utrimque beatitudinem. Collatio vero talis elemosine preter vel contra religionem quam Christus instituit, relevat corpus a temporali miseria tanquam elemosina corporalis. Et ut videtur, sicut dotatio potest esse occasio beatitudinis, sic verisimilius ablatio. Dixi tamen quod hoc non licet facere nisi autoritate ecclesie in defectu spiritualis prepositi, et in casu quo ecclesiasticus corripiendus fuerit a fide dignis.

7. *Scimus quod non est possibile ut vicarius Christi pure ex bullis suis, vel ex illis cum volitione et consensu suo, aut sui collegii quacuquam habiliter vel inhabiliter.* Probatur ex fide Scripture, qua credit ecclesia quod oportet omnem habilitationem hominis primo a Domino procedere. Nullus autem Christi vicarius in isto habet potestatem, nisi vicarie in nomine Domini

notificare ecclesiæ quem Deus habitat. Ideo si quicumque facit non vicarie in nomine Domini, quem propter opus suum recognoscit vel recognoscit auctorem, est Luciferina presumptio, cum secunda ad Corinth. iii. dicat Christus in suo Apostolo: *Omnis vestra sufficientia ex Domino est.*

8. *Non est possibile hominem excommunicari ad sui dampnum, nisi excommunicetur primo et principaliter a seipso.* Probatur eo, quod omnis talis excommunicatio sapit excommunicati deteriorationem. Sed nemo potest, secundum Chrysostomum et Scripturam sacram, deteriorari, nisi ledatur per peccatum quod oportet trahere originem a peccante. Nam meritoria suspensio hominis a Sacramentis, et ingressu Ecclesie non est excommunicatio nisi equivoce. Et quantum ad rationem meriti, est prius ab excommunicatio quam a Christi vicario excommunicante. Nemo enim dampnificatur si non per peccatum subtraheretur Divinum subsidium; ut probatur Ysa. lix. *Iniquitates vestre diviserunt inter vos et Dominum vestrum.*

9. *Nemo debet nisi in causa Dei excommunicare, suspendere, interdicare, vel secundum quamcunque censuram ecclesiasticam vindicando procedere.* Probatur ex hoc quod nemo debet vindictam expetere nisi in causa justitiæ: Omnis causa justitiæ est causa Dei, cum ipse sit fons justitiæ, ergo concludo. Cum enim ex peccato originatur omnis talis punitio, omne vero peccatum sit in Dominum, juxta illud Psalmi i. *Tibi soli peccavi:* Probatur quod nemo, nisi ad vindicandum Dei injuriam, debet ad punitionem talem procedere. Nam ex fide Scripture nemo debet vindictam capere, nisi secundum rationem, qua fit injuria Domino suo, rationem personalis injurie remittendo, ut probatur de precepto Christi Mat. xviii. *Si peccaverit in te frater tuus, dimitte ei usque septuagies septies.*

10. Ex istis probatur decima Conclusio: *Quod maledictio vel excommunicatio non ligat simpliciter, nisi de quanto fertur in adversarium legis Christi.* Probatur sic; Nam talis maledictio non ligat quoad Deum, nisi de quanto ligatus offendit in legem suam, sed non ligat nisi de quanto ligaverit quoad Deum: Ergo concludo. Si enim Deus gratificat, quis est qui condempnet? Deus autem non offenditur nisi fuerit propter adversantiam legis sue. Et isti Articuli juvant ut lex Christi sit carior, cum oportet ipsam esse regulam dirigentem in quocunque processu legitimo, et ut fides Scripture ad Rom. xii. melius imprimatur, *Non vosmet ipsos defendentes, charissimi, sed date locum ire: Scriptum est enim, Mihi vindicta, et ego retribuam.*

11. *Non exemplata potestas a Christo suis discipulis excommunicandi subditum præcipue propter negationem temporalium, sed e contra.* Probatur ex hoc, quod Christus docet honorem Dei et utilitatem ecclesie ante personale commodum, vel negationem temporalium preferendum. Et secunda pars probatur per illud Luc. ix. ubi prohibuit suos discipulos volentes ignem de celo descendere, ad excommunicandum infideles injuste detinentes a Christo et suis discipulis bona sua. *Nescitis, inquit, cujus spiritus estis; filius enim hominis non venit animas perdere, sed salvare.* Unde Conclusio Catholica est, quod non licet Christi vicario excommunicare proximum, nisi propter amorem quo plus sibi afficitur quam

omnibus temporalibus hujus mundi. Et probatur negativa conclusio inductive ac per deducens ad impossibile quod tunc fuisset in Christo est et non.

12. *Discipuli Christi non habent potestatem ad, coactionem civili, exigendum temporalia per censuras.* Probatur de Apostolis et aliis Christi discipulis usque ad dotationem Ecclesie: Qui in quantalibet magna egestate fidelium non exercuerunt hujus potestatem, sed hortati sunt secundum legem Dei, et devotum ministerium ad tales benedictiones que debent esse elemosine voluntarie. Sed priusquam dota est ecclesia, commixte sunt ^{e pro. post.} confusim talis palliata censura et secularis exactio. Immo probatur ^{quam.} quod donatio civilis Luc. xxii. fuit Christi discipulis prohibita.

13. *Non est possibile de Dei potentia absoluta, quod si Papa vel alius Christianus prætentat se quorismodo solvere vel ligare, eo ipso sic solvit vel ligat.* Probatur ex hoc, quod omnis Christianus posset in hoc errare difformiter ab ecclesia triumphante, tunc autem non ligaret aut solveret ut pretendit: Ergo non potest esse quod si pretendit se ligare vel solvere, ita facit. Unde videtur mihi quod usurpans sibi hanc potestatem foret ille homo peccati de quo 2^{da} ad Tessal. 2^o scribitur: *quod in templo Domini sedeat, et ostendat se tanquam esset Deus.*

14. *Crederet debemus quod tunc solum ligat vel solvit simpliciter Christi vicarius quando conformiter legi Christi.* Probatur ex hoc, quod omnis potestas Christi vicarii solum, tunc est in effectum legitima quando beneplacito capitis ecclesie regulatur et regitur.

15. *Hoc debet credi catholice quod quilibet sacerdos rite ordinatus secundum legem gratie habet potestatem secundum quam potest sacramenta ministrare, et per consequens sibi confessum de quocunque peccato contritum absolere.* Probatur ex hoc, quod potestates ordinum in quibuscunque Christi sacerdotibus sunt equales, ut declarat Hugo 2^o de Sacramento. Alique tamen potestates ordinum equales aliis in substantia rationabiliter sunt ligate que possunt solvi ad ministrandum, ut dicit conclusio.

16. *Licit Regibus, in casibus limitatis a jure, auferre temporalia a viris ecclesiasticis, ipsis habitualiter abutentibus.* Probatur de ratione posita in quinta Conclusionem. Nam ad opera magis meritoria et Dominis temporalibus magis facilia sunt ipsi domini magis obligati. Sed foret in casu major elemosina atque facilius dominum temporalem subtrahere elemosinam suam ab edificante ad ^f jehennam per ejus abusum, quam donare ^f gehennam. dictam elemosinam ad subsidium corporale: Ergo concludo. Unde secundum legem triplicem specificatur ista sententia. *Prima est lex civilis de causis corradii collatione 10^a. Si Clericus, inquit lex, veluti Episcopus, vel Abbas habens beneficium a Rege datum, non solummodo persone sed ecclesie ipsum propter culpam suam perdat, eo vivente, ad Regem pertineat; post mortem vero clerici ad successorem revertatur.* *Secunda lex est Canonica 16. q. 7. c. filiis sic dicitur, filiis vel nepotibus ac honestioribus propinquis ejus qui construxit vel dotavit ecclesiam licitum sit hanc habere solertiam ut si sacerdotem aliquem ex collatis rebus defraudare præviderint, aut honesta conventionem compeçant, aut Episcopo vel Judici corrigenda denunciant: Quod si Episcopus fuerit negligens, dicatur Metropolitanis: Et tertio in eorum negli-*

*gentia debet, ut dicit canon Regis auribus intimari. Nec credo id fingibile ad quid Regi denuncient nisi ut ipse correctionem adhibeat. Nec dubium quin correctio Regi pertinentior atque salubrior in hac parte foret bonorum, quorum est capitalis Dominus, subtractio proportionaliter ad delictum. Tertia lex est Evangelica 2^{da} ad Tessel. 2^o, ubi Apostolus sic scribit: *Cum essemus apud vos, hoc denunciabamus vobis, h quum si quis non vult operari, non manducet. Jus ergo nature licentia habentes regnorum gubernacula, rectificare abusus temporalium qui precipue destruerent regna sua.**

† Sic MS.
pro 3^o.
h Sic MS.
pro quoniam

17. *Sive Domini temporales, sive quicunque alii dotaverint ecclesiam temporalibus, licet eis in casu auferre temporalia medicinaliter ad cavendu peccata, non obstante excommunicatione vel alia censura ecclesiastica, cum non nisi sub conditione implicita sunt donata. Probatur ex hoc, quod per se conditio consequens ad donationem bonorum ecclesie est, ut Dens honoretur et Ecclesia edificetur: Que conditio si defuerit, succedente opposito, probat quod perit titulus donationis, et per consequens dominus dans elemosinam rectificare debet errorem. Excommunicatio autem non debet obstare justitie complemento; quia sic posset clericus per excommunicationem reparatorieⁱ conquirere totum mundum.*

i Sic MS.

18. *Ecclesiasticus, etiam Romanus Pontifex potest legitime a subditis corripri ad utilitatem Ecclesie, et tam a clericis quam a laicis accusari. Prima pars probatur eo quod omnis talis ecclesiasticus est frater noster peccabilis, et per consequens ex lege correptionis fraternæ potest corripri. Unde Mat. xviii. Si peccaverit in quocunque assistens de possibili oportunitate debet eum corripere. Et per idem, si fuerit obstinata defensio pravitatis hereticæ, vel alterius peccati vergentis ad spirituale dampnum ecclesie, debet in casu penes superiores accusari, ad finem ut ex ejus correctione periculum ecclesie caveatur. Sic enim reprehensus est Petrus a Paulo ad Gal. 2^o, et multi Papæ irregulares per Imperatores depositi, ut narrat^k Castrensis in sua Policronica libro 5^o. Ecclesia enim est supra istum pontificem: Ideo dicere quod iste non debet corripri ab homine, sed a Domino quomodocunque peccaverit, videtur mihi implicare quod ipse sit supra Ecclesiam sponsam Christi, et quod ad instar Antechristi figuratur ejus extollentia super Christum. Christus enim, licet impeccabilis, voluit esse subjectus principibus etiam in ablatione suorum temporalium, ut probatur Mat. xvii. Hec est aliqualis responsio ad bullam. Istas Conclusiones dixerim ut granum fidei separatum a palea qua ignitur ingratum lolium quod post florem ruboris vindicte fetentis, parat pabulum contra Scripturas fidei Antechristo. Cujus infallibile est signum quod regnet in Clero venenum luciferinum, superbia consistens in libidine dominandi, cujus conjux terrenorum cupiditas concreet filios Diaboli, extinctis filiis evangelicæ paupertatis. Judicium vero ubertatis hujus propaginis probatur ex hoc, quod multi etiam filii paupertatis degeneres fovent loquendo, vel tacendo partem Luciferi, non valentes aut non audentes propter semen hominis peccati injectum in cordibus, aut timorem servilem de amissione temporalium, stare pro evangelica paupertate.*

k Sic MS.
pro Castrensis
in sua
Policronica.

Hec sunt Conclusiones quas vult etiam usque ad mortem defendere, ut per hoc valeat mores ecclesie reformare.

No. XVII.

Conclusiones Magistri Joannis Wycliff contentæ in Schedula inclusa Literis Papalibus dat. Junii 11, 1377.

1. TOTUM genus ¹ hominum concurrentium citra Christum non habet potestatem ² simpliciter ordinandi, ut Petrus, et omne genus suum domineur politice imperpetuum super mundum.

2. Deus non potest dare homini pro se et heredibus suis imperpetuum civile dominium.

3. Cartæ humanitus adinventæ de ³ hæreditate civili olim perpetua sunt impossibiles.

4. Quilibet existens in gratia ⁴ gratificante finaliter nedum habet jus, sed in re habet omnia Dei.

5. Homo potest solum ministratorie dare tam naturali ⁵ filio quam imitationis in schola Christi, tam temporale dominium quam æternum.

6. Si Deus est, Domini temporales possunt legitime ac meritorie auferre bona fortunæ ab Ecclesia delinquente. Deest apud Walsingh.

7. ⁶ Nunquid Ecclesia est in tali statu vel non, est meum discutere, sed dominorum temporalium examinare, et posito casu confidenter agere, et in pæna damnationis æternæ ejus temporalia auferre.

8. Scimus quod non est possibile quod Vicarius Christi pure ex bullis suis, vel ex illis cum ⁷ voluntate et consensus suo ⁸ et sui Collegii quendam habilitet vel inhabilitet.

9. Non est possibile hominem excommunicari nisi ⁹ prius et principaliter excommunicaretur a seipso.

10. ¹⁰ Nemo ad sui deteriorationem excommunicatur suspenditur, vel aliis censuris cruciatur, nisi in causa Dei.

11. Maledictio vel excommunicatio, non ligat simpliciter, nisi quantum fertur in adversarium legis Christi.

12. Non est ¹¹ exemplificata potestas a Christo ¹² vel suis Discipulis excommunicandi subditos, præcipue propter negationem temporalium, sed e contra.

¹ humanum.

² simplicem.

³ hæreditate perpetua.

⁴ gratum faciente jus ad rem, sed pro suo tempore jus in re super.

⁵ filio imitationis temporale dominium et æternum implicitum.

⁶ Hic totus Articulus deest.

⁷ volitione.

⁸ aut.

⁹ primo.

¹⁰ Nemo debet nisi in causa Dei excommunicare, suspendere, interdicere, vel secundum quamcunque censuram ecclesiasticam vindicando procedere.

¹¹ exemplata.

¹² deest.

13. Discipuli Christi non habent potestatem ¹³ coacte exigere temporalia per censuras.

14. Non est possibile de potentia Dei absoluta, quod si Papa vel ¹⁴ alius prætendat se quovismodo solvere vel ligare, eo ipso solvit vel ligat.

15. Credere debemus quod solum tunc solvit vel ligat, ¹⁵ quando se conformat legi Christi.

16. Hoc debet catholice credi, ¹⁶ quilibet sacerdos rite ordinatus habet potestatem sufficienter Sacramenta quælibet conferendi, et per consequens quemlibet contritum a peccato quolibet absolvendi.

17. ¹⁷ Licet Regibus auferre temporalia a viris Ecclesiasticis ipsis abutentibus habitualiter.

18. ¹⁸ Sive Domini temporales, sive sancti Papæ, sive sancti, sive caput Ecclesiæ, qui est Christus, dotaverint Ecclesiam bonis fortunæ vel gratiæ, et excommunicaverint ejus temporalia auferentes, licet tamen propter conditionem implicitam delicto proportionabili eam temporalibus spoliare.

19. ¹⁹ Ecclesiasticus ymo et Romanus Pontifex potest legitime a subditis et laicis corripri, et etiam accusari.

Istæ fuerunt propositiones vel potius deliramenta sæpediti Johannis, quæ ad aures domini apostolici pervenere.—*Walsingham*.

¹³ ad, coactione civili, exigendum.

¹⁴ alius Christianus.

¹⁵ simpliciter vicarius Christi conformiter—

¹⁶ quod quilibet sacerdos rite ordinatus secundum legem gratiæ habet potestatem secundum quam potest sacramenta ministrare, et per consequens sibi confessum de quocunque peccato contritum absolvere.

¹⁷ Licet Regibus in casibus limitatis a Jure—

¹⁸ Sive Domini temporales, sive quicumque alii dotaverint Ecclesiam temporalibus, licet eis in casu auferre temporalia medicinaliter ad cavenda peccata, non obstante excommunicatione, vel alia censura ecclesiastica; cum non nisi sub conditione implicita sunt donata.

¹⁹ Ecclesiasticus etiam Romanus Pontifex potest legitime a subditis corripri ad utilitatem Ecclesiæ, et tam a clericis quam a laicis accusari.

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